



RESEARCH WRITING

What Is Research Writing?

Research writing is a type of academic writing that uses outside sources to support your ideas. These sources may include books, articles, or credible websites.

In research writing, you do not rely only on your own opinion. Instead, you combine your ideas with information from other writers to build a stronger argument.

Why Is Research Writing Important?

Research writing helps you:

- support your ideas with evidence
- learn more about a topic
- develop strong, informed arguments

In college, many assignments will require you to include research in your writing.

What Counts as a Source?

A source is any outside information you use in your paper. Common sources include:

- academic articles
- books
- credible websites

Strong sources are accurate, reliable, and written by experts.

Using Sources in Your Writing

The first time you introduce a source, include the author's name, their credentials, and some context (such as the title or type of source). After that, you can usually refer to the author by last name only.

There are three main ways to use sources in your writing:

Quoting

A quote uses the exact words from a source. Quotation marks are required.

Example:

According to Blankstein and Wolff-Eisenberg, “Students...defined success as more than just the attainment of a degree or credential.”

Use quotes when the original wording is important or meaningful.

Paraphrasing

A paraphrase restates information from a source in your own words. The idea is the same, but the wording is different.

Example:

According to Blankstein and Wolff-Eisenberg, students often define success in broader ways than just earning a degree.

Paraphrasing shows that you understand the information.

Summarizing

A summary gives a brief overview of a larger idea or source.

Example:

Research shows that students view success as more than just completing a degree. For example, Blankstein and Wolff-Eisenberg explain that students also value skills, personal growth, and their overall experience.

Explaining Your Sources (Analysis)

Analysis means explaining your source and showing why it is important. When you use a source, you must explain it. Do not just include a quote or paraphrase and move on.

Example:

“Students...defined success as more than just the attainment of a degree or credential” (Blankstein & Wolff-Eisenberg). This shows that students value personal growth, skills, and their overall experience, not just finishing a program.

Analysis helps your reader understand why the source is important.

Introducing Sources

It is helpful to introduce your sources so your reader understands where the information comes from.

Example:

According to Blankstein and Wolff-Eisenberg in their article “Holistic Student Success,” students define success in ways that go beyond earning a degree.

This makes your writing clearer and more professional.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism means using someone else’s ideas or words without giving credit.

To avoid plagiarism:

- use quotation marks for direct quotes
- rewrite information in your own words when paraphrasing
- include citations when required

Always give credit to the original source.

Tips for Strong Research Writing

- Use credible and relevant sources
- Combine your ideas with source information
- Explain your sources clearly
- Avoid using too many direct quotes

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Using Sources Without Explanation:

Including a quote without explaining it can confuse your reader.

Fix: Always explain why the source is important.

Overusing Quotes:

Too many quotes can make your paper feel like a list of other people’s ideas.

Fix: Use more paraphrasing and add your own analysis.

Weak Sources:

Using unreliable sources can weaken your argument.

Fix: Choose credible, academic sources when possible.

Final Takeaway

Research writing is about balance. Use sources to support your ideas, but make sure your voice is still clear. Your goal is to combine outside information with your own thinking to create a strong, well-supported paper.

Works Cited:

Blankstein, Melissa, and Christine Wolff-Eisenberg. "Holistic Student Success." *Measuring the Whole Student: Landscape Review of Traditional and Holistic Approaches to Community College Student Success*, ITHAKA S+R, 2020, pp. 17–29. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep49431.6>. Accessed 2 June 2026.