



Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip Teaching source use

Finding, scrutinizing, using, and citing source materials are essential moves in academic writing. Learning to use sources properly helps students avoid plagiarism and learn meaningful ways to join the ongoing conversations among scholars and professionals.

Tip #1: Focus students on reading sources effectively.

Good source use requires good source reading. [Studies have shown that the majority of student citations come from a source's first page.](#) Give students strategies for reading texts deeply but also efficiently and effectively.

- For example, rather than assigning a traditional annotated bibliography, require students to engage texts more thoroughly by assigning a [research matrix](#) instead. A research matrix can encourage students to respond to sources in particular ways that go beyond mere summary. For example, a research matrix might ask students to articulate the following items:

	Citation	Idea 1	Evidence	Idea 2	Evidence	Comment	Questions	Relation to other sources	Etc.
Source 1									
Source 2									
Source <i>n</i>									

Tip #2: Encourage students to engage sources in meaningful and productive ways.

Studies have shown that students tend to incorporate sources predominantly [at the sentence level rather than at the idea or argumentative level.](#) Whenever source use is superficial, the purpose of research becomes irrelevant.

Focusing primarily on the technical means of source citation can lead to student writing “looking good” without actually being good. Instead, get students to focus on three essential moves of successful source use by providing models or templates:

- introducing and orienting sources: “In the context of _____, X argues that _____.”
- interpreting and explaining sources: “When X says _____, she means _____.”
- connecting sources to the student’s own arguments and claims: “However, X’s claim that _____ fails to account for _____.”

Learn more:

- University of Minnesota Center for Writing Resources: [Writing with Sources](#), [Teaching Academic Citation Practices](#), [Preventing Plagiarism](#)
- Sandra Jamieson, [“Reading and Engaging Sources”](#)
- Rebecca Moore Howard, [“Writing from Sources, Writing from Sentences.”](#)
- [The Citation Project.](#)

Further support: Visit us online at <http://writing.umn.edu/tww>. To schedule a phone, email, or face-to-face teaching consultation, [click here](#).

Our purpose is to provide practical strategies for teaching with writing. Our goal is to offer timely and pragmatic support to faculty members and instructors who teach with writing in undergraduate and graduate courses in all disciplinary areas.