

USING SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

You do a lot of work to find good sources. When it comes time to write, you want to be sure you use them effectively to support your arguments. This video will give you tips on how to do that.

Many students use sources to support a point without explaining much. Here's an example (read example). The writer assumes that the sources will speak for themselves.

The problem with this is that it is basically a string of facts or examples with no explanation. It describes and summarizes what you read but doesn't offer an argument. It also focuses on other peoples' words and ideas and doesn't add any of your own thoughts, which is what your instructor is looking for.

Instead, you need to use your sources in two ways. First, you should use your sources to come up with your own arguments. Learn more about how to do this well in another video, *Creating Arguments*. Second, you need to use your sources to support those arguments. The sources don't speak for themselves—they are there to provide evidence for your argument.

A good formula to make sure you do this effectively is to use what's called a quote sandwich. Your quote or summary should always be sandwiched between two things: an introduction to the quote, which is the argument or claim you are making, and an explanation of why or how the quote supports that argument.

Let's look at our example again and improve it using a quote sandwich. Our first source talks about how sometimes nanny jobs evaporate once foreign nannies arrive in Canada. I need to think about what the point is that I'm trying to make by including that source. In this case, I want to say that the nanny program doesn't do enough to prevent exploitation of nannies. That is my argument or claim, so I state that as the first part of my quote sandwich. My summary of the source is there to support it and provide evidence.

Then, I need to analyze the source, and explain why or how it supports the argument. Here, I decide to explain that this shows there should be better oversight to be sure jobs are legitimate.

If I put the intro, quote, and explanation together into a paragraph, I have a quote sandwich.

This is a good formula to use whenever you use your sources, either by quoting them or summarizing them in your own words. It ensures that your thinking is given more emphasis than the supporting evidence, and your reasoning and analysis is clearly laid out. It also works in reverse: every time you make a claim or statement in your paper, make sure it is supported by evidence and uses the quote sandwich format. If you do this, you'll end up with a much better paper.

If you have any questions, ask us at library.wlu.ca/help/askus