Writing Exercise: Incorporating Evidence

Today I want you to focus on writing/drafting a moment where you support an idea with evidence.

This is just a draft and is not set in stone; this exercise is designed to get you thinking about how to go about incorporating evidence and what to consider as you do.

Before Incorporating Evidence into Your Essay

- Why do we need evidence in our papers?
  - A persuasive paper requires evidence, based on research, to convince the reader your claim is correct
  - Just as a jury is presented with evidence in a trial to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, so too does your reader need evidence to accept your thesis beyond a reasonable doubt.
- Avoid Unsupported Opinions
  - An "unsupported opinion" is an opinion, statement, or assertion that is not supported in the essay by evidence
  - Opinions/statements are unsupported and should be avoided if they:
    - cannot be supported by credible sources or reliable research;
    - are informed only by personal experiences, religious beliefs, or strong emotions and not by relevant data/research
  - Because your opinions and claims should be based on your research, you should have evidence to support any such statements
  - Establish a connection between your opinion and reliable evidence—demonstrate to your reader that every point in your essay has been informed by research and credible sources.
- What should your evidence do?
  - Evidence used should always support your thesis statement or provide necessary information
  - Your thesis is derived from the research you've done, so you should already have evidence (although more may still be needed)

Three ways to incorporate evidence:

- **Paraphrase**
  - Paraphrasing is rewording someone else's idea or explicit content in your own words
  - A paraphrase should be different in diction and syntax!
  - To paraphrase: Read and annotate the passage to understand it fully; cover the quote you are paraphrasing to avoid the urge to copy; rewrite the essential info using your own words; check your paraphrased work to ensure you have not accidentally written anything word for word from the original and that the information included is correct; revise!
  - Avoid "**Patch Writing**": merely swapping out words for **synonyms** without making any changes to syntax, so that the paraphrase is still basically just the original
- **Summary**
  - A summary, like a paraphrase, is putting someone else's ideas into your own words
  - Summaries are shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material pulling out the main points.
  - Paraphrasing is rewording of someone else's idea or explicit content in your own words in roughly the same amount of space, while summary is reducing a significant passage into the essential ideas.
- **Quotation**

- Quotations are the exact words of an author, copied directly from a source, word for word, and placed within quotation marks (“ ”)
- While there are times you may need to quote a large section of text, most of the time you do not need every part of a passage and should try to keep your quote to under four lines in your essay
- Instead of large **block quotes**, you may want to summarize/paraphrase the passage, or trim the quote
- Altering quotations:
    - There are times where you may want to adjust a quote to fit into the flow of a sentence or to cut out unneeded portions of a passage
    - When you cut out portions of a text, replace the words/sentences removed with an ellipsis within brackets—[. . .]
        - *Example: “They believed in many gods [. . .] chief among which was Zeus” instead of “They believed in many gods—like Apollo, the sun god, Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and Hades, the god of the underworld—chief among which was Zeus, god of lightning and king of Olympus.”*
    - You can also make slight changes to the wording within a quote (and bracket accordingly) so that it works within your sentence structure or to replace a pronoun (he, she, it, they, etc.) with what it refers to
        - *Example: “[The ancient Greeks] believed in many gods [. . .] chief among which was Zeus” instead of “They believed in many gods [. . .] chief among which was Zeus”*
    - When altering a quote, use brackets— [ ] —to show your edits
    - Be careful how you edit a quotation—Too many changes alters the meaning and causes the reader to question its credibility/accuracy
    - **Note:** You do not need the ellipsis at the beginning or end of quotes, even if you are only using a few words from the center—you only need ellipses if you are removing words from inside your selected text
    - **Note:** You should generally remove the final punctuation from a quotation if the punctuation doesn’t make sense within your sentence and conveys no meaning in the original
        - In general, commas and periods do not convey any meaning, so they usually can be removed from a quotation after the last word you quote.
        - Exclamation points and questions marks do convey meaning, so generally they should not be removed from quotations

Strategies for Incorporating Evidence

The evidence you use is only as strong as the way you incorporate and analyze it. Here are a few strategies for folding your evidence into your text smoothly:

- A quote/paraphrase should not stand on its own
    - You must demonstrate and explain to your reader how each piece of evidence supports your claim(s)
    - Never insert a quote or a paraphrase abruptly into your writing without first introducing the quote (or paraphrase), citing it, and explaining/analyzing it
    - Do not end a paragraph with a quotation—Always conclude the paragraph with your ideas
- Introduce your evidence
    - Generally, any time you introduce evidence from a source, you should provide **attribution** to the source using a “signal phrase” of some kind

- A **signal phrase** is used to give credit to the source and lead into a quote, paraphrase, or summary
  - Introduce the source (perhaps including their credentials, authority, title of the work, etc.)
  - After introducing the source, use a **signal verb** to indicate that the source's words/ideas follow:

adds	remarks	exclaims	announces	replies	claims
comments	responds	estimates	writes	points out	predicts
argues	suggests	proposes	declares	criticizes	proclaims
notes	complains	observes	thinks	presents	concludes

  - *Example: As Dejus X. MacKenna, a professor of mythology, explains . . .*
- When incorporating a source into your paper for the first time, you should reference the author's full name (if provided) and also the title of the publication—after the initial introduction of that source, you can provide the reader with just the author's last name.

- The **S.E.A.(S.) Method**, aka Sandwiching
  - **S**tatement (your claim/idea)
    - You are making a claim, perhaps your topic sentence or a sub-claim
    - *Example: One of the extraordinary ways elephants are able to withstand the crushing force of their own weight is their feet.*
  - **E**vidence (quote, summary, paraphrase)
    - What evidence supports your claim? What is the best form for it to take?
    - Use a signal phrase to introduce your source and evidence
    - *Example: Dr. X. Pert (2016), a researcher on elephant biology at the National Zoological Park, explains, that an elephant's round feet contain a pad of "tough, gelatinous material" that absorbs the impact of each heavy step.*
  - **A**nalysis (your explanation and evaluation of evidence)
    - After the quote/paraphrase, you need to explain the significance of the evidence
      - How does it relate to your Statement (claim)?
      - How is it proof/support of your claim?
      - Why should we trust the source and their evidence?
    - If the concept is a bit difficult to understand, you may need to explain it in a different way, using metaphors or examples
    - Your reader should not have to interpret the quote and what it means or how it helps to support the point you are trying to make.
      - Never leave any room for interpretation—It is your responsibility as the writer to interpret the quote for your reader and provide the significance.
    - *Example: In other words, an elephant's foot has additional padding that acts like a shock absorber. This thick pad between an elephant's bones and the ground cushions its steps and prevents the elephant from breaking its feet under its own weight.*
  - **S**tatement (your idea taken further with support of evidence)
    - Take the idea further or build on it to the next point!
- Support your evidence and claims with additional evidence
  - Weave multiple sources together to support each claim
  - Using multiple pieces of evidence and multiple <u>types</u> of evidence to back up your claims gives them authority and adds to your credibility

Practice Incorporating Sources

While there are many ways to bring in your evidence in support of your claim, the S.E.A.S. Method is a good way to think about how to do so.

1. Write out your **topic sentence/sub-claim**—the position you are taking in this paragraph
    a. Make a claim that supports your (hypo)thesis statement
    b. It should be clear how that statement supports the thesis
    c. Don't worry about transitions from previous paragraphs or ideas just yet
2. Select your evidence that supports your claim
    a. What sources led you to this understanding/claim? What evidence did they use that made you accept/adopt this idea?
    b. Find a strong quote/passage from one source that offers this evidence
3. Decide the best way to incorporate this evidence: **quotation**, **paraphrase**, or **summary**
    a. Should you quote the source directly? If quoting, do you need to make any adjustments to make it clearer to the reader without the original context? Do you need to cut out segments?
    b. Should you paraphrase/summarize the passage? How can you express the same idea in your own words? Are you actually expressing the idea in a new way, and not **patch writing**? Are you expressing the idea(s) accurately?
4. Write a **signal phrase** for your evidence
    a. Identify is the author/speaker and perhaps their credentials
    b. Identify the title of the source of the evidence
    c. Use an appropriate **signal verb** to introduce your source's words/ideas
    d. Examples: X states, "_____"; According to X, "_____"; As X explains, "_____"
5. Include a parenthetical in-text citation for the source following the quote/paraphrase
    a. Note that the period/punctuation for your sentence goes <u>after</u> the citation
    b. *Example: X states, "_____" (X 88).*
6. Write a sentence or two that explains/analyzes the evidence to your reader
    a. What does the evidence mean? What should your reader understand about it?
    b. Explain how the evidence supports your claim, why it is significant, etc.
    c. You can use phrases such as "in other words" or "As we can see"
7. Write a sentence or two that takes your idea further or builds on it (a new statement) and repeat the process with another piece of evidence from another source
8. Put them all together!

Note: This is just an exercise to think about how to incorporate sources. You will not necessarily use this exact formula every time, as that would probably feel too rigid or repetitive to your reader, but it is a helpful way to think about the structure of incorporating sources. This is meant merely as a possible and helpful model, not as a required template.