

Signal phrases are used to introduce information from an outside source (such as a scholarly journal article). They not only help readers identify the source and type of information (facts, opinions, observations, etc.) but also help readers distinguish the author's information from your own. Additionally, signal phrases prevent *floating quotations*—quotes that appear to be used at random without any explanation. Floating quotations can confuse readers because (1) the quote isn't explained and (2) it can lead readers to assume the idea or opinion is an original point.

Effective signal phrases include the author's name and an action verb that characterizes the information. Try varying the placement and language of the signal phrase to avoid repetition. Also, be consistent with verb tenses. MLA uses the present tense (e.g. "notes") or present perfect tense (e.g. "has noted"). APA uses the simple past tense (e.g., "compared") or present perfect tense (e.g., "has compared").

Signal Phrase Examples: APA

In the words of researchers Serrano and Coronado (2002), "..."
(p. 87).

As Joe Molina (2006) noted, "..."

The mother of a child killed by a teen driver, Patti Buensrostro
(personal communication, September 3, 2003), pointed
out that "..."

"...", yet Carlos Fuentes (2001) has written, "..."
(p. 141).

"...", claimed TAMIU President Dr. Ray Keck.



Signal Phrase Examples: MLA

- a) Serrano and Coronado state, “...” (87).
- b) As Joe Molina notes, “...”
- c) Patti Buenrostro, Associate Professor of Spanish Literature, contends “...” (4).
- d) “...,” states Carlos Fuentes, “but ...” (141).
- e) “...,” according to TAMIU President Dr. Ray Keck (12).
- f) Television news broadcaster Roy Herrera offers another perspective: “...” (10).



REMINDER: Whether you are using MLA or APA, also include a parenthetical citation after the direct quotation. (See the handouts “APA Style: Format and Documentation” or “MLA Format and Documentation: Quoting”)

Verbs to Use in Signal Phrases

acknowledge	charge	deny	note	reject
admit	claim	describe	observe	remark
advise	compare	diagnose	oppose	report
agree	confirm	disagree	pointed out	respond
analyze	consider	emphasize	prompt	state
argue	contend	imply	propose	suggest
assert	criticize	insist	reason	support
believe	declare	introduce	refute	think

Choose appropriate verbs so the reader knows if the source is refuting a claim, illustrating a point, or comparing points of view. Also, also be consistent with verb tenses, depending on the style used.