

Multiple References to a Single Source in a Paragraph

When I devote a whole paragraph to presenting ideas from the same source, do I need to keep citing that same source **after every sentence**?

Make it clear in every sentence whether you are summarizing the source in question. **Do not put just one citation at the end of the paragraph** and assume that it applies to the whole paragraph.

There are three ways to show that you are presenting ideas from the source: parenthetical citation, narrative citation, and signal phrases. Use all three of these devices.

1. **Parenthetical citation** requires **placing all the citation information within one set of parentheses**.

Here is an example in the format of the **APA**:

What we sometimes call the panda's 'thumb' is, in fact, an enlarged bone in the wrist called the radial sesamoid (Gould, 1980, p. 22).

Here is the same example in the **MLA's style**:

What we sometimes call the panda's 'thumb' is, in fact, an enlarged bone in the wrist called the radial sesamoid (Gould 22).

2. **Narrative citation** involves **putting one part of the citation information within parentheses and another part (the author's name) outside them**.

Here is an example in the **APA's style**:

Gould (1980, p. 21) introduces the panda's thumb to illustrate an important point about evolution.

Using the **MLA format**, we get:

Gould (21) introduces the panda's thumb to illustrate an important point about evolution.

In this example, one part of the citation information, the author's name, appears outside the parentheses and is essential to the sentence's grammatical construction. Another part of the citation (the page number and – for the APA – the year) is enclosed within parentheses.

If one of your paragraphs summarizes or discusses just one source, consider beginning that paragraph with a narrative citation of that source.

3. **Signal phrases** are used to attribute an idea explicitly to a source.

For instance, suppose that we add to the first case (above) in the following way, using the **APA's format**:

Gould (1980, p. 21) introduces the panda's thumb to illustrate an important point about evolution. He adds that Darwin was aware of this important feature of evolutionary theory.

Here, “He adds that” is a signal phrase, because it informs the reader that the author borrowed from Gould the sentence’s main point (namely, that Darwin knew about this characteristic of evolutionary theory). In the absence of a signal phrase, a reader might think that this interpretive point about Darwin was the author’s own insight rather than Gould’s.

A **signal phrase** can work only if the source **is cited** in a previous sentence. The **signal phrase** depends on that previous citation: it can stretch the earlier citation’s range to cover a new sentence but will not suffice without that earlier citation.

A signal phrase is not enough when there is **direct quotation**. Even if you have just cited the source, cite it again *if the next sentence has a quotation*.

Consider the following example (in the **MLA’s format**):

Gould (100) writes that as Disney’s depictions of Mickey Mouse changed over the years, Mickey’s eyes grew from 27 percent of head length to 42 percent. Gould takes this result, among others, to be evidence of “creeping juvenility” in Mickey’s portrayal (Gould 100).

Even though the **citation in the second sentence** refers to the same page as the first citation, the second citation is required because of the direct quotation. When you quote, do not rely on just a signal phrase (“**He writes ...**”). Instead, add a citation.

Signal phrases might not be enough when the material that you are presenting comes from different pages of the source document.

Consider this example (in the **MLA’s style**):

Gould (21) introduces the panda’s thumb to illustrate an important point about evolution. He writes that what we sometimes call the panda’s ‘thumb’ is, in fact, an enlarged bone in the wrist called the radial sesamoid (Gould 22).

Both citations are needed because the information is drawn **from different pages** of the source.

While signal phrases can reduce the need for a parenthetical or narrative citation, be cautious in using such phrases. After all, if you do not use a citation to make it clear when you are borrowing ideas from a source, you may be guilty of **an academic offence**.

If you are concerned about losing marks because the citations might reveal that your paragraph consists of paraphrases and quotations of the same source, then make more substantial changes to the paragraph (as opposed to just omitting some citations) to make your writing more original.

For further advice, consult the following blog posts:

Cook, A. (2011, July 11). Citing an Author Throughout a Paragraph: Notes on a Tricky APA Shortcut [Blog Post]. <http://waldenwritingcenter.blogspot.com/2011/07/citing-author-throughout-paragraph.html>

Krupa, T. (2013, April 4). When to Include the Year in Citations Appearing More Than Once in a Paragraph [Blog Post]. <https://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2013/04/when-to-include-the-year-in-citations-appearing-more-than-once-in-a-paragraph.html>

The MLA Style Center. (2018, April 12). If my paraphrase consists of several sentences, should a citation for the original source appear after each sentence? [Blog Post]. <https://style.mla.org/paraphrase-of-many-sentences/>

Reference

Gould, S. J. (1980). *The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History*. W. W. Norton & Company.

