

Integrating Sources & Indicating Stance

The language you choose to introduce your sources is extremely important, because it lets readers know what you think about your sources—in other words, it conveys a great deal about your “stance” (see Gordon Harvey’s “Elements of the Academic Essay”) as a writer. Well-chosen verbs (other than “says,” or “writes,” or “states”) can make your writing feel more confident and show that you are comfortable writing in conversation with sources.

Note how the following verbs imply very different meanings about the sources they might introduce. Then, read the four examples below and think about the language in them which indicates stance. Finally, read through a piece of your own writing and circle every verb you use to introduce sources. Do you notice any patterns? How might you vary your choice of verbs, to be more precise? How might the way you introduce your sources help you think about deepening your analysis of them?

Verbs commonly used to introduce sources:

acknowledges	comments	finds	rails
adds	compares	grants	reasons
admits	confirms	illustrates	refutes
agrees	contends	implies	rejects
argues	declares	insists	reports
asserts	denies	notes	responds
believes	disputes	observes	suggests
boasts	de-emphasizes	offers	thinks
claims	emphasizes	points out	writes

What do the following introductions imply about the stance of the writer in relation to his or her sources?

In *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness* (2010), UC Berkeley philosopher Alva Noë boasts, “in this book I advance this truly astonishing hypothesis: to understand consciousness in human and animals, we must look not inward, into the recesses of our insides; rather, we need to look to the ways in which each of us, as a whole animal, carries on the processes of living in and with and in response to the world around us.” (7). Neurologist Antonio Damasio is unlikely to be astonished. After all, in 1999, he published a remarkably similar argument: “Consciousness, as we commonly think of it, from its basic levels to its most complex, is the unified mental pattern that brings together the object and the self” (11).

In her memoir *Thinking in Pictures*, Temple Grandin declares that “Words are like a second language to me” (19).

Writing about neurodiversity, Nick Walker complains, “I’m getting tired of running into the same basic errors over and over.” Though his terms and definitions are precise and useful, his insistence that they represent “proper usage” may be premature.

Fernando Vidal contends that “If personhood is the quality or condition of being a person, brainhood could name the quality or condition of being a brain” (5).