

Signal Phrases

Signal Phrases Defined:

- a phrase, clause, or even sentence which leads into a quotation or statistic.
- these generally include the speaker/author's name and some justification for using him or her as an expert in this context
- it may also help establish the context for the quotation.

What do signal phrases do?

- Signal Phrases are an essential element of research writing.

Signal Phrases:

- ◆ introduce source material
- ◆ indicate where source material comes from.
- ◆ shape your reader's response to a source through appropriate word choice

Why do we use signal phrases?

1. **To mark boundaries:** Signal phrases mark boundaries between your words and the source's words. By marking the boundaries, you also provide a *smooth transition* for the reader between your words and the source.
2. **To emphasize the source:** Signal phrases *call attention to the author or source* being used. In some cases, such as the use of a well-known author, specific information about the source is important for the reader to know.
3. **To avoid plagiarism:** All source material must be cited, and *signal phrases are one way to cite a source*—however, additional citation formatting may be necessary depending on your citation style.

How would you write a signal phrase?

- Signal phrases can be a *single word, phrase, or sentence*.
- Signal phrases usually come at the beginning of a sentence *before the source material*, but they can also occur in the *middle* of a source or at the *end*.
- Signal phrases usually include the *author's name* but can also include the *author's job title or background* (“reporter for Washington Post,” “researcher,” “senator,” “scholar,” and so on) and/or *the title of the source*.
- They often include *verbs*; be sure your word choice fits the context of the source.
(NOTE: To avoid repetition, try to vary both the language and placement of your signal phrases.)

Model Signal Phrases:

- In the words of researchers Redelmeier and Tibshirani, “...”
- As Matt Sundeen has noted, “...”
- Patti Pena, mother of a child killed by a driver distracted by a cell phone, points out that “...”
- “...” writes Christine Haughney, “...”
- “...” claims wireless spokesperson Annette Jacobs.
- Radio hosts Tom and Ray Magliozzi offer a persuasive counterargument: “...”

VERBS THAT ACT AS SIGNALS:

- Acknowledges
- Adds
- Admits
- Addresses
- Advances
- Affirms
- Alludes
- Analyzes
- Argues
- Asserts
- Attests
- Balances
- Believes
- Claims
- Comments
- Compares
- Confirms
- Connects

- Considers
- Contends
- Contradicts
- Contrasts
- Creates
- Declares
- Defines
- Delineates
- Demonstrates
- Denies
- Describes
- Develops
- Discusses
- Discloses
- Discovers
- Disputes
- Emphasizes
- Endeavors

- Endorses
- Establishes
- Estimates
- Explains
- Expresses
- Extrapolates
- Finds
- Focuses
- Grants
- Highlights
- Hypothesizes
- Illuminates
- Illustrates
- Implies
- Indicates
- Informs
- Insists
- Introduces

- Maintains
- Means
- Notes
- Maintains
- Means
- Narrates
- Negates
- Notes
- Notices
- Observes
- Offers
- Organizes
- Points out
- Prepares
- Presents
- Promises
- Proposes

- Proves
- Purports
- Questions
- Reasons
- Recognizes
- Recommends
- Recounts
- Refers
- Reflects
- Refutes
- Reiterates
- Rejects
- Relates
- Remarks
- Replies
- Reports
- Responds

- Reveals
- Says
- Sees
- Shows
- Signals
- Specifies
- Speculates
- States
- Submits
- Suggests
- Supports
- Supposes
- Theorizes
- Thinks
- Wishes
- Writes
- Verifies