

# Attributions

The expectation for college writing assignments, directed by a thesis, is that students *will* read, consider, and reference the ideas of other people. A student's thesis or central idea *should be* strengthened by bringing in evidence from others who add support. A literature essay or research assignment is, therefore, like a written discussion between an author of a book, story, or article, one or more critics or experts, and the student. Each person's ideas are *integrated* into the student's assigned paper, so it is important to indicate who said what.

**Attributions identify and give credit to the original source** of the supplemental ideas, facts, statistics, opinions, statements, and visual or musical components. Establishing the original source of an idea with attributions prevents plagiarism, which is the intentional or inadvertent use of another person's ideas without proper citation. Without attributions to signal ownership of individual ideas, the information appears to come directly from the student. All writers and speakers are required to properly acknowledge the ownership of ideas whether they are expressed in the format of literature, photography, art, music, or film.

## Attributions Are Developed in the Third Person. Some examples are:

The author, John Grisham, says...  
The author states...  
According to art critic Harold Rosenberg...  
The literary critic, Sharon Hall asserts...  
The famous biologist, Rachel Carson theorized that...  
Emily Dickenson, the 19<sup>th</sup> century American poet expresses themes of...  
References made to Rene Descartes' famous idea...demonstrate that...  
President Obama defends his point of view on...by arguing that...  
Many disagree with Freud about his ideas on...because of...

Additionally, attributions help to develop a smooth connection between the writer's ideas and the supporting material credited to someone else. To avoid weak and disjointed use of supporting material do not begin or end a body paragraph with a quote. Avoid inserting the evidence into the essay without first setting it up with your own idea. Many students simply shoot supporting details into the paper like a dart on a dartboard. The quote just hangs on in the body of the paragraph without any connection to the student's point. The quoted or paraphrased material must connect logically to the student's main idea. It must build support for that point and must indicate the original source. For example:

According to the May 2011 Pew Internet and American Life Project Report "half of all adults (50%) use social networking sites" suggesting that increasing numbers of Baby Boomers are becoming more computer literate.

