Tikrit University

Collage of Education for Humanities

English Department

Research paper

Third Year

Gathering Support

Asst. Lect. Noor Arkan Ghaleb

2025-2026

Chapter Four: Gathering Support

When you have identified possible sources for your paper, compiled bibliography cards, and actually found the items in the library, you are ready to gather support. First, you need to know **how to evaluate your source**; that is, does it actually cover your topic and is it reliable? Second, you need to know **how to take notes efficiently** so that you will have ready access to your material when you begin writing your paper.

Finally, you need to know **how to develop and refine a working outline** in order that your research will always be properly directed.

Evaluating Your sources

Some sources can be more valuable to you than others. For example, you should try to find as many primary sources as possible.

A primary source: is the origin of basic facts on your subject; secondary sources use primary sources or other secondary sources as its basis.

The importance is not in classifying sources as primary or secondary but in recognizing that there are two kinds of material available to you. There are two kinds of materials (source) available to everyone.

Here are some of the advantages and disadvantages of each kind. secondary sources

1-They present judgments about the sources material.

2- The scope is wide.

3-They are not limited.

4-They compiled details from several primary sources.

primary sources

1-They give the basic material on a topic.

2-The scope of a single source may be narrow.

3- Many primary sources are more limited. For example, (an interview with one person or a newspaper report quoting two people who witnessed an event.

5-They are results of someone else's research.

6-They are the critical articles explaining these works.

4-They are in general and specially those for events in the past.

5-They are original in the research.

6-They are results of someone else's research.

1-They present judgments about the sources material.

2- The scope is wide.

3-They are not limited.

4-They compiled details from several primary sources.

5-They are results of someone else's research.

You try to find as many primary sources as you can instead of relying entirely on secondary sources Because each type has its own strengths, and each will help you evaluate the other: details from primary sources can help you determine the worth of the judgments in secondary sources; the secondary sources can help you understand the material in your primary sources and can identify where you might look for additional primary sources.

Relevant Material

Sometimes you are not sure that the sources listed in the card catalog, indexes, and bibliographies are really about your topic since titles can be ambiguous or vague. You need to be something of detective.

When you find a source that has a similar topic like yours, how do you decide whether this source is relevant to your topic or not?

First, check the table of contents –maybe there will be chapter on your topic or something similar. If there is not next

Second, check the introductory material. The preface, author's introduction, foreword, or whatever it's called may tell you the range of material covered in the book and the authors' intent.

Third, you make a partial bibliography card on your topic and hope it's available.

Fourth, check the index under such possible headings to see what you can find.

Reliable Material

Once you find that a source does have relevant material, you have to determine whether that material is reliable or not.

First check the date. Even if you are writing about the effect of visual aids on developing students' speaking skill in 1990, a secondary book or article written recently may be more valuable to you that one written 33 years ago because later sources have the advantage of drawing upon all previous sources. So, the date is well worth checking.

Taking Notes

After evaluating a source and deciding that it appears useful, your next step is to take notes. It is recommended to use index cards because they are easy to handle and easy to rearrange. There are four kinds of note cards:

1.Summary note card: condenses the words from a source into a much shorter version written in your own words. Also, summary note card means to capture the main idea of a source but do not care about the exact words.

2.Quotation note card: we might use a copying machine to reproduce an occasional long passage, in which case we also make an accompanying note card as a reference. A short quotation won't take long to write down, and having the material on a card to match to remind you not just of the idea of the passage but also of the especially effective wording in the original.

3.Paraphrase note card: is a retelling of a passage in your own words. But there is difference between summary and paraphrase, both can adopt the organization and flow of the original. A paraphrase tends to follow sentence by sentence pattern of the original more closely and also is about the same length.

4.Mixed Quotation and Summary or Paraphrase Note Card:

To paraphrase or summarize do not quote key words or paraphrases without using quotation marks and presenting the exact words of an author without giving credit to plagiarism which everyone must avoid. But when you want to paraphrase or summarize and feel some of the author's words are worth keeping, then a mixed paraphrase and quotation note card must be taken from it.

Evaluating a working outline

If you want to develop an outline early keep revising and expanding it as you find new sources. This working outline will help direct your research and you may find gaps that needs to be filled. In other words, you need to work back forth between note-taking and developing an outline.

Formal outline

Sometimes your instructor may ask you to submit a formal outline with your research paper. There are two kinds:

1-Summary outline that presents only the major sections of a paper.

2-A detailed outline that presents all of the support.