

Signal Verbs: Introducing Summaries and Quotations

Adapted in part from *They Say, I Say* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

When you are incorporating the thoughts and words of other writers (or speakers) in your papers, you will need to think carefully about how you characterize *how* they said what they said. One way we signal the context or intent of a writer we are summarizing or quoting is in the signal verb we choose. Did the writer assert, or merely acknowledge? Did they praise something, or just report it to us? Here is a list of signal verbs for you to practice using in your papers.

Note: Do not use “says” when introducing a quote or summary. “Says” doesn’t say anything to your reader about the tone and intent of the piece you are using.

Verbs for Making a Claim

argue
assert
believe

claim
emphasize
insist

observe
remind us

Verbs for Expressing Agreement

acknowledge
admire
agree
endorse

extol
praise
celebrate the fact that
corroborate

do not deny
reaffirm
support
verify

Verbs for Questioning or Disagreeing

complain
complicate
contend
contradict

deny
deplore the tendency to
qualify
question

refute
reject
renounce
repudiate

Verbs for Making Recommendations

advocate
call for
demand
encourage

exhort
implore
plead
recommend

urge
warn