

TLC/College of the Canyons

When you create a signal phrase to introduce a quote, select a verb that matches the tone, attitude, or purpose of the author you are quoting. The signal phrase should be in present tense: The author ~~claimed~~ claims . . .

Example #1: Here is a passage from an article by Justin McCurry. It appeared in the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, in March 2011:

The power plant at the centre of the biggest civilian nuclear crisis in Japan’s history contained far more spent fuel rods than it was designed to store, while its technicians repeatedly failed to carry out mandatory safety checks, according to documents from the reactor’s operator.

In quoting this passage, we need to create a signal phrase that indicates what McCurry is *doing* in this passage. We can infer from the passage that McCurry is *reporting* on a nuclear crisis in Japan. Therefore, we can use the verb “report” in our signal phrase:

In his article in *The Guardian*, Justin McCurry **reports**, “The power plant at the centre of the biggest civilian nuclear crisis in Japan’s history contained far more spent fuel rods than it was designed to store, while its technicians repeatedly failed to carry out mandatory safety checks, according to documents from the reactor’s operator.”

Example #2: Here is a passage from an editorial (opinion piece) by Bob Herbert. It appeared in the *New York Times* in March 2011:

If you really want to improve the education of poor children, you have to get them away from learning environments that are smothered by poverty. This is being done in some places, with impressive results. An important study conducted by the Century Foundation in Montgomery County, Md., showed that low-income students who happened to be enrolled in affluent elementary schools did much better than similarly low-income students in higher-poverty schools in the county.

What is Herbert doing in this passage? In the first sentence, he is presenting his own opinion. In the remaining sentences, he is providing support for his opinion, citing a study by the Century Foundation. In quoting Herbert, we need to select a verb that matches his purpose:

In his editorial, Bob Herbert **contends** that “[i]f you really want to improve the education of poor children, you have to get them away from learning environments that are smothered by poverty.” To support his view, he **cites** a study by Maryland’s Century Foundation, which “showed that low-income students who happened to be enrolled in affluent elementary schools did much better than similarly low-income students in higher-poverty schools in the county.”

Note that “contends” is not the only verb we could choose, above. Some appropriate alternatives are “asserts,” “claims,” and “argues,” among others.

Here are some verbs that you might choose for signal phrases:

Author is stating a point (neutral tone):

comments	hints	relates	says
continues	mentions	remarks	states
discusses	notes	replies	writes
explains	points out	reports	
expresses	records	responds	

Author is making an observation or considering a point:

analyzes	evaluates	reveals	speculates
assesses	observes	sees	supposes

Author is presenting an opinion:

advises	concludes	finds	interprets	suggests
alleges	contends	holds	maintains	thinks
argues	decides	indicates	persuades	urges
asserts	declares	implies	predicts	warns
believes	emphasizes	insists	proposes	

Author is supporting a point:

adds	demonstrates	justifies
defends	describes	shows
exemplifies	illustrates	

Author is agreeing with an idea or someone else's point:

acknowledges	affirms	concur	confirms
admits	agrees	concedes	grants

Author is arguing against an idea or someone else's point:

accuses	condemns	deplores	disputes
belittles	criticizes	deprecates	laments
bemoans	debates	derides	objects
complains	denies	disagrees	protests