



Signal Verbs and Phrases

Signal verbs (or phrases) are used to integrate source material into the text of an essay, and indicate that “borrowed” information is about to be used. These active verbs and phrases will often be used with “author tags,” citing the source from which you obtained the information. The author’s name may be used in the sentence itself, or inserted parenthetically after the citation (using MLA or even APA).

Diana Hacker, in *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*, has this to report on signal phrases: “When your signal phrase includes a verb, choose one that is appropriate in the context. Is your source arguing a point, making an observation, reporting a fact, drawing a conclusion, refuting an argument, or stating a belief? By choosing an appropriate verb, such as one on the following list, you can make your source’s stance clear” (510).

accepts	classifies	diminishes	handles
according to	comments	disagrees	hesitates
acknowledges	communicates	disconfirms	highlights
adds	compares	discusses	hints
admires	complicates	disputes	hypothesizes
admits	concedes	disregards	
advises	concludes	distinguishes	identifies
affirms	condemns		indicates
alleges	confirms	editorializes	infers
allows	conflates	emphasizes	informs
analyzes	confronts	endorses	initiates
announces	confuses	ends	illuminates
answers	considers	enumerates	illustrates
appraises	contends	envisions	implies
argues	continues	establishes	inquires
ascertains	contradicts	evaluates	insinuates
asks	contrasts	exaggerates	insists
assaults	convinces	exemplifies	interprets
assembles	counters	experiences	in the words of
asserts	criticizes	experiments	intimates
assesses	critiques	explains	investigates
as (the author points out)		expresses	
assists	declares	exposes	judges
	deduces		
believes	defends	facilitates	lists
buttresses	defies	feels	
	defines	finds	maintains
categorizes	demands	formulates	marshals
cautions	demonstrates	furnishes	measures
challenges	denies		mentions
charges	describes	grants	
claims	determines	guides	
clarifies	develops		



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narrates	pronounces	repudiates	supplies
negates	proposes	resolves	supports
notes	protects	responds	sympathizes
notices	proves	restates	synthesizes
nullifies	provides	retorts	
		reveals	tells
objects	qualifies	reviews	tests
observes	quotes		theorizes
offers		says	toys with
opposes	ratifies	seeks	traces
outlines	rationalizes	sees	tracks
	reads	shares	treats
parses	reaffirms	shifts	
perceives	reasons	shows	urges
persists	reconciles	simplifies	uncovers
persuades	reconsiders	specifies	
phrases	refutes	solves	verifies
pictures	regards	states	views
pleads	rejects	stipulates	
points out	relates	stresses	wants
portrays	relinquishes	substantiates	warns
postulates	remarks	suggests	writes
praises	reminds	substitutes	
proclaims	replies	summarizes	
professes	reports	supplements	

(Adapted from Hacker's *The Bedford Handbook for Writers* and Lunsford's *St. Martin's Handbook*, 2nd ed. by Karol Dehr, IPFW Department of English and Linguistics, 2007.)