Choosing useful sources that support your argument is crucial; sources can provide context, explanation, or support for specific points and claims.

For an overview of related key topics on integrating sources, visit the videos and quizzes in this tutorial.

Explore It

During the research process, make sure you spend your time wisely and that you find sources that are appropriate for your argument. This will help ensure a solid, well-supported paper. The sources you choose should fit with your research question in a meaningful way. Ask yourself which quotations or other evidence in the source will support a key point in your research project.

Also, don’t forget to give special consideration to sources that present arguments that disagree with your key points. If a source represents counterarguments for your paper’s thesis, how will you address these disagreements? If you ignore all counterevidence, your readers may wonder why.

Take a look at the Works Cited page for a student research paper on the controversy related to genetically modified foods prepared using MLA documentation style, on page 2. The marginal notes highlight sources for the ways they support the student’s argument. Based on this excerpt (this is page one of two) from the student’s list of sources alone, you can see how the student has gathered and made use of a range of sources to present a strong, more supported argument.
Works Cited


Learn It

To choose the most useful and effective sources, look for those that might serve one of the following purposes in your research project:

- Support your main idea through background information, history, definitions, statistics, case studies, or other facts
- State expert views or give authoritative information
- Offer connections through comparisons or contrasts
- Provide visuals including up-to-date charts, graphs, or tables with useful statistics and data
- Give reliable, informed counterargument; present conflicting evidence or opposing viewpoints

Examine the sources you have gathered and the notes you have taken thus far to see which ones align with one of these goals. As you choose which sources will be most useful, you control your focus on sources from which you can later obtain relevant information to include in your research paper.

Use It

Using the bulleted guidelines provided above, use Questia, the Web, or your college’s library catalog and databases to find sources related to your topic. Be sure to stay organized and make notes on which sources fit which needs (support, context/background, expert opinion, or counterargument, for example). This will allow you to later work them into your paper effectively when you draft.