

BEAM Writing

Writing a strong research paper means giving more than facts. Often, writers must make a claim, or thesis, in their paper. The facts and sources contained in a paper are the basis for and support of the claim. To optimize sources, one must use them in different ways. The BEAM method describes four ways to use sources. While a paper should try to utilize all four ways, a well written paper can scrape by while using only two or three. This method is only a guide and can be adjusted to fit the specific needs of any paper.

B: Background Source- general information, basic facts; this kind of source provides information needed by the readers to understand the subject/context.

E: Exhibit Source- used for interpretation or analysis; the writer presents and analyzes this kind of source. A source that provides an example to explain a claim is one use of this type of source.

A: Argument Source- heart of the paper; this source's claim is disputed or expanded. The writer can put these sources into conversation with each other. A conclusion should be drawn based on the conversation.

M: Method Source- offers key terms, a model, or a perspective; may define a way to understand an argument. These sources guarantee that the reader will share the writer's knowledge base.

An individual source can be used as any number of these kinds of sources within the same paper. For example, a single Civil War diary can be used as two kinds of sources. It can create a setting as a background source and can be analyzed for emotions or opinions as an exhibit source.