

BEAM Method - Heuristic for Source Usage

The B.E.A.M. Method is a **heuristic** (mental shortcut or thinking machine) created by Joseph Bizup to explain **how to use sources** in an academic paper. B.E.A.M. stands for “background, evidence, argument, and method.” This handout explains the B.E.A.M. Method and gives an example of its usage.



How Does It Work?



Source Function	Explanation	Types of Sources	Where Can This Be Seen in the Paper?
B: Background	Using a source to explain the general scope of a concept. Sources used for background general provide fact or context for the larger work.	Encyclopedia articles, overviews in books, statistics, historical facts	Introduction
E: Exhibit	Using a source to directly provide evidence. Evidence includes data, observations, and documents that can be analyzed.	Text of a novel or article, field observations, results from an experiment, interview data	Body/Results
A: Argument	Using a source to directly engage in an argument. Sources used for argument typically include works from scholars that can be explained, justified, or defended.	Scholarly articles, books, critical reviews, criticism, editorials	Body, Introduction, Literature Review
M: Method	Using a source to explain the way you went about framing your paper. Sources for method can use theories or techniques that you want to incorporate.	Texts from a theorist, parts of books with reference to theorists, research that employs a particular frame or scheme	Methods, Introduction, Body



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