

Using Quotes

A quotation is a reference to an authority or a citation of an authority. There are two types of quotations: direct and indirect.

1. A **direct quotation** uses the exact words of an authority and must be identified in your paper with quotation marks and parenthetical documentation.

2. An **indirect quotation**, or paraphrase, is a restatement of a thought expressed by someone else that is written in your own style that needs to be documented.

Tips on Quoting and Paraphrasing

YOUR OWN WORDS SHOULD CLEARLY DOMINATE. You are in control, not your sources. If you rely heavily on other people's words, then you are not writing the paper; they are. You need to paraphrase and summarize your sources as well as quote them.

USE A VARIETY OF SOURCES. If you rely too much on one source, your reader may as well go directly to that source instead of reading your paper. Don't overuse any one source.

KNOW WHEN TO USE QUOTATIONS: Choose your quotations carefully and for specific reasons.

- Later reference--You plan to discuss the quotation in some detail in your paper, and you feel that the reader needs to see the original in order to follow your discussion in all its complexity.
- Memorable language--You think that the style of the source is so powerful, pithy, or elegant that you simply must let the reader hear the actual words.
- Authority--You feel the need to bolster your argument by citing the words of an acknowledged authority in the field. (Remember that mere authority is not necessarily convincing; the argument itself must be convincing.)
- Accuracy--You have tried several times to paraphrase an authority but have been unable to do so adequately. (Remember that accurate paraphrasing helps you understand the source and that paraphrasing takes practice and always requires several drafts. Don't give up too quickly.)
- Brevity--You have tried several times to paraphrase an authority and each time have ended up with twice as many words as the original. (Again, since paraphrasing assures understanding and takes practice, play with the text for a while before surrendering to quotation.)

Keep quotes to a minimum. Overusing quotations can result in "patchwork" writing, a jumble of miscellaneous information from various sources that is merely pieced together. Quotations should fit logically into your text.

- Use quotations to support your argument.
- A short phrase or sentence is more easily understood than a long quotation.
- Look for the "kernel" or the most important part of the quotation and extract it.
- Paraphrase a quotation in your own words when possible.

ALWAYS USE YOUR OWN WORDS BETWEEN QUOTATIONS.

The reader needs to know how you are connecting the ideas, so you need to provide your own link between quotations. Never use quotations back to back without your own linking words.

DISCUSS YOUR QUOTATIONS. Don't just pop in a quotation and run. Introduce the quotation so that the reader knows its relevance to your text; then discuss its significance in the context of your paper. The longer the quotation, the more likely you will need to double the number of your own words to discuss it.

Using Quotes

Incorporate quotations smoothly into your paper:

- Combine a paraphrase with a quotation.
Original: Tania Modleski suggests that "if television is considered by some to be a vast wasteland, soap operas are thought to be the least nourishing spot in the desert" (123).
Revised: In her critique of soap operas, Tania Modleski argues that some view television as "a vast wasteland" and soap operas as "the least nourishing spot in the desert" (123).
- Introduce a quotation by citing the name of the authority combined with a strong verb.
Example (quotation): Thoreau **believed** that "a true patriot would resist a tyrannical majority" (23).
Eisenhower **admitted** in retrospect that Sputnik had created two problems: the "near hysteria" of the American people and the need "to accelerate missile and satellite perspectives" (211).
Example (paraphrase): In his memoirs, Eisenhower **claims** to have been kept silent because of the confidentiality of government secrets (225).
- Describe or identify the source of information if it is available.
Example: In The Coming of Age, Simone de Beauvoir contends that the decrepitude accompanying old age is "in complete conflict with the manly or womanly ideal cherished by the young and fully grown" (65).
- Use key words from the quotation and make them a grammatical part of your sentence.
Example: As William Kneale suggests, some humans have a "moral deafness" which is never punctured no matter what the moral treatment (Acton 93).

SELECT THE RIGHT VERB AND TENSE. Don't overuse "says" or "states." Here are some alternatives:

acknowledges	believes	defends	proposes	submits
admits	comments	explains	refers	suggests
affirms	considers	expresses	reveals	testifies
argues	criticizes	insists	speculates	writes
asks	declares	mentions	states	

SET OFF LONG QUOTATIONS: If a quotation is more than four lines long, set it off from your text by indenting.

- Introduce the quotation with a complete sentence and a colon.
- Indent ten spaces, double space the lines, (the same as your paper) and **do not use quotation marks**.
- Do not indent the opening line unless the quote begins a new paragraph.

Example:

The lengthy prayer with which Malory ends Morte D'Arthur conveys what many would call the medieval period's central concern:

I pray you all gentlemen and gentlewomen that readeth this book of Arthur and his knights from the beginning to the ending, pray for me while I am alive that God send me good deliverance. And when I am dead, I pray you all pray for my soul even as you would pray for your own. (412)

Final Reminders:

- Do not quote when a paraphrase will do.
- Do not cite sources for information that is readily available in popular reference books:
 - well-known dates and events
 - identities of famous personalities and politicians
 - familiar sayings

Always provide a context for your quotations -- explain to the reader why and how the quote is relevant to the topic.