

When and Why to Quote

You should only use quotations when you have a specific need for them. The following are times when you should consider using quotations:

1. **FACTS** - When you need facts and figures to support your argument; these make your argument more believable to your reader
2. **AUTHORITY** - When you need an authority to support your argument; these also make your argument more believable.
3. **SPECIFIC LANGUAGE** - When you find the specific language from one of your sources to be a compelling or precise way of phrasing something you want to talk about or consider; you can use quotations in this way to make forceful points to your reader.
4. **TONE** – When you want to use language from a source (particularly a firsthand account) to help set a particular emotional tone in your writing.
5. **PRECISE LOGIC** - When you want to analyze the exact logic of a source for your reader.
6. **LITERARY ANALYSIS** - In a paper about literature you will want to quote parts of the work that are essential for your argument; this helps the reader see that you have carefully considered the work you are writing about.

Do not include information in quotations that does not help you advance your argument.

A note about paraphrasing:

Sometimes, you might want to borrow an idea from another author, but you do not need the entire quotation. In that case you can summarize their idea in your own words. When you do this, you do not use quotation marks, but you still need to cite the text.

A note about “quotes”:

Quotes in this context refers to any passage or sentence you are using from another text. It does NOT mean that you can only use things that are in quotation marks in the original text.

Setting Up Quotations

Set Up: Every quotation you include in any essay needs to be set up, or introduced, to your reader. This setup should give them context they need to understand the quote and/or the source. Here are some pointers for how you should set up your quotations.

Method 1: You can use a short phrase, an incomplete sentence that announces the work that is always followed by a comma:

- Gourevitch, a journalist who traveled extensively in Rwanda after their genocide, “...”
- In chapter 4 of We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families, a Belgian scientist says, “...”

Method 2: You can use a complete sentence followed by a colon.

- In the article “Imperialists Divide Africa,” the author describes the reasons that Europeans invaded Africa: “...”
- In “Social Darwinism Handout,” American clergyman Josiah Strong makes an argument for expanding the American empire: “...”
- Phillip Gourevitch describes the significance of dogs after the genocide in Rwanda: “...”

Method 3: You can integrate the quotation into your own writing. When you do so, punctuate it as though the words were your own.

- The truth of Rwandan history is difficult to determine, because “Rwandans had no alphabet; their tradition was oral, and therefore malleable...” (Gourevitch, 48)
- In the chapter 11 of his book, Gourevitch notes that “The genocide had been tolerated by the so-called international community, but I was told that the UN regarded the corpse eating dogs as a health problem.” (148)

Suggestions for verbs to include in signal phrases: Adds, Acknowledges, Admits, Agrees, Argues, Claims, Asserts, Points out, Reasons, Refutes, Illustrates, Denies, Observes, Describes.

Avoiding “Dropped” Quotes

One of the best ways to support your ideas is by quoting from a reliable source. HOWEVER, avoid “dropping” quotes without warning. Be sure to explain or analyze the quote afterwards.

Example of a “dropped quotes”:

- Although cooking is a common, everyday experience to many Americans, some cultures view it as an art form. “Cooking should be treated with respect and given the time and attention it deserves”(Wanzek 3).

Quotes With Follow Up

The following examples illustrate common phrases writers use to “slide” a quotation in a paragraph.

- Blue Scholars, a talented hip-hop group argues that the purpose of hip-hop is, “to inspire social consciousness”(“Mainstream Rap vs. Hip Hop”). This idea is rarely expressed through mainstream rap that we hear
- According to Riley, an 11th grade student at Animas High School, “Michael’s high-energy pep talks at school assemblies really get the crowd pumped up fo’ sheezy!” (personal interview, 9/13/12). Clearly Riley loves megaphones and might consider a career in performing at children’s birthday parties.
- Researcher Kyle Anderson argues that teachers “must give students questions to answer while watching movies in class” (13) as it significantly improves student’s attention and comprehension.
- What has impressed Ashley most is that her students “can make [her] laugh no matter what the circumstances”(personal interview, 1/5/12). It is evident that Ashley enjoys her job despite being contained to a former dentists’ garage.

Now YOU do it!

1. Trade drafts with a partner. Find 3 places in their paper where they use a quotation. For each of these:
 - a. Set up their quote correctly, using one of the three methods above. Be careful with punctuation!
 - b. If there is no follow up phrase to their quote, add one! If there is one, give suggestions to make it better
 - c. Track changes so that they can see the changes you made.
2. Now go back to your own paper—revise ALL your quotations so they are set up correctly with context and a follow up.