Guidelines for Quoting Sources

THE NUTS & BOLTS

Beware of "ghost quotes," which are simply "dropped" into an essay without warning the reader that someone else's ideas are coming up. Remember that every integrated quotation should have the following:

1. **A signal phrase**—a phrase to warn the reader that someone else's ideas are going to be introduced. If you're using the source for the first time, the signal phrase should include
   - the author's name
   - the title of the author's work
   - a signal verb (e.g. said, argued, suggested).

2. **The quotation**—the author's exact words enclosed in "quotation marks."

3. **The parenthetical citation**—to indicate where you found that quotation. The year of publication and page number should be enclosed in parentheses at the end of the quotation. The year of publication can also be placed after the author's name, while the page number is at the end of the quotation. Regardless of placement, both the year and the page must be in parentheses. (See Examples below.)

THE FORMULAS

Vary the way you integrate quotations by using these formulas: **Signal phrase + comma + "quotation"**


**Signal phrase + that (no comma) + "quotation"**

Elena Poniatowska (1991), celebrated journalist and author, admitted that "in Latin America, we write because this is the only way we know not to disappear, and in order to bear testimony about those who disappear because of politics or hunger" (p. 87).
Complete sentence + colon + "quotation"

David Sedaris (2003) commented on the humorous difference in the rites of passage between his youngest brother and the rest of the Sedaris siblings: "While our departures had been relatively painless, Paul's was like releasing a domestic animal into the wild" (p. 264).

**TOP 6 RULES OF THUMB**

1. **Quote the Good Stuff.** Beware of using quotations that do not mean anything or add substance to your essay.
   - If a source says something so well that you couldn't possibly change it, use it!
   - If a source backs up a point you made, use it!
   - If you *understand* what a source is saying, use it! You will have to analyze it later, so understanding it will help you.

2. **Avoid Overquoting.** Remember "less is more." Do not pad your essay with other people's ideas.

3. **Keep Quotations Short.** Keep your quotations 1–2 sentences long or use a few key words/phrases. If you need it all, turn the quotation into a "block quotation," but use them sparingly! "Block" the quotation if it's more than 40 words long. Block the quotation by having it start on a new line and in the same position as a new paragraph.

   **Example (Note: Block quotations should not be double–spaced):**

   In the chapter "Chicken Man," McBride (1997) narrated his rebellion as a teenager with honesty but without remorse:

   I was obviously hiding, and angry as well, but I would never admit that to myself. The marvelous orchestrated chaos that Mommy had so painstakingly constructed to make her house run smoothly broke down when Daddy died, and Mommy was in no fixing mood. (p. 140)

4. **Copy Quotations Correctly.** Misspellings and use of incorrect grammar when it's obvious that the source couldn't have made those mistakes affects your own credibility as a writer. Accuracy indicates care for one's work.

   Use brackets when you alter a word or phrase from the quotation. Example: Picciano (2001) stated, "[Distance learning] technologies [have] certain benefits and certain limitations and, as indicated earlier, a best technology does not yet exist" (p. 61).
Use an ellipsis when you omit words or phrases from the quotation. Use an ellipsis with brackets [...] when you omit an entire sentence. Example: When Fuller (2005) returns home, she explained, "...I was dislocated and depressed" (p. 72).

5. **Do Not Start a Paragraph with a Quotation.** A paragraph should begin with your ideas. The first sentence of a paragraph is known as the *topic sentence* or *assertion*, both of which support the focus of the essay. In turn, the quotation supports the topic sentence.

6. **Do Not End a Paragraph with a Quotation.** Always conclude the paragraph with *your ideas*. The last sentence should be part of your analysis of the quotation.