



The University Writing Center

Connecting Writers with Readers

Quotation Integration

THE PRINCIPLE

Direct quotations provide valuable evidence to support your argument. They also build your ethos as a writer, demonstrating to your reader that you have done your research, consulted the proper sources, and that you are putting your ideas into conversation with others, and with your primary sources.

However, certain methods for integrating your quotations are more effective than others.

It is usually not a good idea to begin a sentence with words other than your own. Therefore, when integrating quotations, you usually want to begin your sentence with an **introductory phrase** followed by a comma or a colon before the quote. Often, your sentence of interpretation will be its own complete sentence immediately following the quote.

Quotes cannot be incorporated as their own sentence and instead must be integrated into a sentence you create. Therefore, always make sure that you **frame** your quotes, providing an introduction before, and your interpretation and analysis after. You also want to make sure you have a “Goldilocks” amount of quoted material: not too much and not too little. For example:

In They Say/I Say, the authors explain, “Since quotations do not speak for themselves, you need to build a frame around them in which you do that speaking for them” (44). Therefore, writers need to insert quotations in a way that accurately contextualizes those quotes.

As you can see in the example above, the quote isn't just dropped into the paper, but instead incorporated as part of a sentence with an introductory (or signal) phrase. This helps the reader to be prepared for the quote that follows.

Writers can use various methods for providing this framing. Here is an alternate format:

Some experts recommend framing your quotations: [insert quote]. [insert interpretation/analysis].

In this format, the quote is integrated using a colon rather than a comma. This works if you have a complete thought before your quotation, rather than just an introductory phrase.

Here is what it looks like when you do NOT frame your quote:

It is important to use quotes in your papers. “Since quotations do not speak for themselves, you need to build a frame around them in which you do that speaking for them.” Quotes give evidence for your argument.

Notice how this quote is simply dropped in between two vaguely related sentences without explaining how it is relevant to either your argument or the specific point you are making at that moment. Using an introductory phrase or sentence as discussed above puts the quote into context and lets you prepare the reader for how to interpret the quote.

Capitalization:

Only capitalize the first letter of your quote if the quote is a complete sentence.

Omitted or altered text within the quote:

Any changes to the original quotation, including changes to capitalization or words added for clarity should be indicated by using brackets.

For example:

The protagonist's motivations are further clarified when she "picked up the picture [of her sister] and started to cry" (14).

Any text missing from within the body of the quote should be indicated with an ellipsis. For example, if you are quoting three consecutive sentences and you decide to omit the second sentence, you can continue the quote using . . . to indicate the missing text.

Long Quotes:

Each citation style has different criteria for what constitutes a long quotation and how to cite it accordingly. If you use a long quote in your paper, make sure to check the appropriate style manual to find out how to incorporate it correctly. And remember, direct quotes are best used only when the language of the original is particularly striking or notable, so use them sparingly (unless told otherwise by your professor)!

Single vs. Double Quotes

Most of the time, you will be using the traditional double quotes (") to indicate quoted text. However, if you are quoting something within a quote, you would use single quotes (') to indicate that you are quoting text that your source has quoted. For example:

They Say/I Say gives readers some good examples of how NOT to introduce a quote, when they write, "you should not introduce quotations by saying something like 'Orwell asserts an idea that' or 'A quote by Shakespeare says'" (50).

Notice also the triple quote at the end: when your quote-within-a-quote ends in the same place as your original quote, then you close both quotes at the same time with three quotation marks (a single quote + a double quote).

NOW SOME FINE PRINT

Make sure that you ALWAYS correctly cite any quoted material according to the style required (MLA, APA, Turabian, Etc.). The only thing worse than a quote that isn't correctly integrated is a quote that is neither integrated nor cited!

Works Cited and Consulted:

Graff, Gerald, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. 2nd Ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2012. Print.

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2014. Web. 3 Nov. 2014.

"Turabian: Block Quotations." *Western Carolina University Writing and Learning Commons*. Western Carolina University, 2014. Web. 3 Nov. 2014.