

QUOTATIONS

When you include the ideas of others in your writing, it is important to know why to use quotations, how to select the best quotations, and how to integrate quotations into your own argument.

Why Use Quotations?

Use quotations

- to enhance and strengthen your own argument
- to present the *exact* wording of an idea whose wording you wish to preserve:
e.g.: Francis Crick refers to the double helix model of the DNA molecule as “the secret of life” (17).

Selecting Quotations

You will have an easier time selecting the best quotations if you begin early by marking texts as you read. **Look for quotations that**

- present striking, memorable phrasing
- give a strong, specific example
- introduce a claim open to interpretation, or
- concisely summarize main points

As you plan your argument, reflect on the quotations you have marked. Select quotations that you feel comfortable analyzing and that help develop your argument.

Avoid:

- using quotations to fill up space.
- using quotations to impart general information that you can state in your own words,
e.g.: Marco Polo stayed with the Kahn for “fully seventeen years” (Powers 132).

Integrating Quotations

A quotation presented as a separate sentence does not tell your audience how the idea relates to your argument; you should *integrate* quotations into your argument.

Do not present quotations as separate sentences.

NO: “We are morally bound to limit our use of natural resources” (Lee 95).

Do not use the page number or the title as the subject of your sentence.

NO: Chapter Seven says, “...” or, “Page eighty-eight says, “...”

Avoid a weak lead-in verb such as ‘says.’

WEAK: Farranto *says*, “...” (88).

Select a lead-in verb that conveys the author’s attitude towards the quoted material.

OKAY: Farranto *objects*, “...” (88).

There are **MORE EFFECTIVE** ways to integrate quotations into your argument.

• **Weave the quoted material into your own sentence:**

e.g.: Descartes introduces the possibility that the world is controlled by a “malicious demon” who has “employed all his energies to deceive me” (24).

- *State a full claim of your own, followed by the quotation as support for the claim* (the *colon* is the correct punctuation here).
e.g.: Elesin detects the colonists' hypocrisy: "To prevent one death you will make other deaths? Ah, great is the wisdom of the white race" (406).

Important Tips

- It is not necessary to quote full sentences; select the *essential part* of the idea.
- *Do not quote excessively*; your paper should present your ideas, not someone else's.
- As a general rule, do not end a paragraph with a quotation; end with your ideas.

Punctuation/Format

- Use *block quotation* form when the quotation is longer than four lines of your text. Indent one inch from each margin; use one and a half or double spacing; omit quotation marks. You may use a smaller font for block quotations.
- Use an *ellipsis* ... to indicate an omission of words within the quotation; use *brackets* [] to indicate when you have changed or added wording (caution: avoid changing the meaning of the quotation).
- Place *semicolons* and *colons* outside the quotation mark: e.g., "...infamy";
- Place *commas* and *periods* inside the quotation mark: e.g., "...forever," or "...forever."
- Exception to above: place the period outside the quotation mark when the quotation is followed by a citation: e.g., "... deceive me" (24).

Punctuation Before Quotations

The punctuation of the phrase or clause before the quotation depends upon whether the phrase or clause is independent (i.e., could be a complete sentence by itself).

- *When the quotation is merged into the clause, no punctuation is necessary.*
Descartes introduces the possibility that the world is controlled by a "malicious demon" who has "employed all his energies to deceive me" (24).
- *When the quotation is preceded by a form of a word like say or reply, that word is followed by a comma.*
She knows she is no longer safe, saying, "I feared for my Safety in this wicked House" (28).
- *If a complete sentence or independent clause precedes the quotation, a colon is the appropriate mark of punctuation.*
She knows she is no longer safe: "I feared for my Safety in this wicked house" (28).

For more information on using quotations, consult your professor or the following sources, available at the Writing Center and on its web page:

- "Avoiding Plagiarism" (includes a discussion of paraphrasing)
- "Essentials of Writing" (the on-line Style Sheet)
- Links to MLA and APA citation information
- "How Do I Cite That? Help with MLA Documentation"
- "English Dept.: Form for Quotations and Citations" (for poetry and prose)