

Review: Incorporating a quotation in your writing

Dos

Do put double quotation marks around quotes – they're clearer to see than single ones and they don't look like lost apostrophes.

Do quote accurately. If you can't remember the quotation properly, don't use it.

Do comment on words you quote.

Don'ts

Don't ever say: 'And I quote...' You should not use the "I" pronoun in a persuasive essay, and the phrase is cliché.

Don't ever say: 'The writer quotes...' The writer doesn't quote, that's what YOU do!

Don't quote huge lengthy passages and then think you've worked miracles. As a rule of thumb, there should be at least twice as many of your words commenting on the quotation, as there is in the quotation.

Using Quotations in Your Essay –some helpful hints

1. Introduce the quotation with your own words and integrate it grammatically into the sentence.

NO: In this study, children were taught effective ways to deal with confrontations through role playing.
"They showed a significant increase in coming up with relevant solutions to interpersonal problems"

YES: In this study, children were taught effective ways to deal with confrontations through role playing: "
They showed a significant increase in coming up with relevant solutions to interpersonal problems "

BETTER YET: In this study, children who were taught effective ways to deal with confrontations through
role playing "showed a significant increase in coming up with relevant solutions to interpersonal problems "

2. Reproduce the exact wording, punctuation, capitalization and spelling of the original, including errors. Supplementary information should be enclosed in square brackets if within the quotation or in parentheses if after the quotation.

Enclose in square brackets comments of your own added to clarify information or pronouns in the original.

He felt that "it [the essay] should be analytical rather than descriptive."

3. Separate longer quotations from the text.

Use quotation marks and include within the text four lines or fewer of prose or three lines or fewer of poetry (use a slash (/) with a space on each side to signify the end of each line of poetry).

Set off from the body of your text five lines or more of prose or four lines or more of poetry. Indent ten spaces and omit quotation marks. These quotations are most often introduced by a colon.

Smith explains the use of essay-writing terminology:

An assignment which asks you to do some library research to write on a topic may be called an essay, a paper, a research essay, a research paper, a term assignment, or a term paper. The terminology is not necessarily consistent: a term paper may tend to be a longer paper written in advanced courses, but not necessarily. You may be assigned a specific topic or asked to choose your own from subjects relevant to the course. (225)

4. Use ellipses to omit words or phrases from quotations

Ellipses indicate that some unnecessary words have been left out of a quotation. We use ellipses when we want to make a quotation fit more seamlessly with the flow of our essay.

- ▶ There are spaces between each period
- ▶ When you quote just a word or a short phrase, no ellipsis is necessary
- ▶ Also, do not use an ellipsis to indicate that you have left out the beginning of a sentence; only missing words from the end or somewhere in the middle of a sentence need to be indicated with an ellipsis.

ORIGINAL: The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees.

SMOOTHLY INTEGRATED QUOTATION: Hemingway uses the image of a momentary darkness to suggest the woman's growing disillusionment. After her quarrel with the man, "[t]he shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain[. . .]." (21). A similar shadow gradually develops over their relationship.

ORIGINAL: That look of seeing into things, of seeing through a thing to something else, was in the eyes of the sheriff's wife now.

SMOOTHLY INTEGRATED QUOTATION: Mrs. Peters sometimes appears to be almost supernatural. For example, Glaspell describes her "look of seeing into things, of seeing through a thing to something else[. . .]." (333). However, this "look" really demonstrates a sense of intuition rather than any magical powers.

5. Changing or adding words within a quotation

Use brackets to indicate any changes you make to quotations while fitting them into your sentences (for reasons of style, verb tense, or general understanding). Look again at the above change of the original word "she" to "[Dee]." Here's another example:

ORIGINAL: "You don't have to call me by it if you don't want to," said Smith.

SOMEWHAT SMOOTHLY INTEGRATED QUOTATION:

The new and supposedly improved Dee tells her mother that she doesn't "'have to call [Dee] by [her new name] if [she doesn't] want to'" (234).

This quotation is technically correct (notice also the correct use of single quotation marks for dialogue), but three changes within such a short quotation render it a bit awkward. In general, if you have to change more than two items in a short quotation, it's better to find another way to write it. One way is just to paraphrase it (to paraphrase is to restate someone else's words in your own words, without quotation marks).