Using Quotations: When & How

Quoting the writing or speech of someone is one of the ways you can incorporate the ideas of another writer/speaker into your own writing. It is always necessary to attribute the text to the original author/speaker; otherwise it will be considered plagiarism, whether you intended to plagiarize or not.

USING QUOTATIONS: WHEN & HOW

When you quote someone, you repeat their statements word for word, enclosing the quoted material in quotation marks. Use quotations when you want to:

• emphasize an author's or speaker's words to support your argument
• convey the tone and voice of the author/speaker
• disagree with what the author/speaker is saying
• highlight particularly eloquent or powerful phrases or passages, when *how* something is being said is as important as *what* is being said

Keep in mind that, in general, you want to quote sparingly. Don't let other writers/speakers do all the talking for you, but rather use quotations to contribute to what *you* are saying.

When quoting, there are certain "rules" that apply, ways to do it effectively and correctly:

1. Provide context for the quoted material.
   Convey to the reader when, possibly where, and under what circumstances the quoted material was written or spoken.

2. Attribute the quotation to its author.
   Tell your reader who is speaking. Try reading your text aloud to see if your reader, without looking at your paper, would be able to tell where the quotation begins. If not, you need to attribute the quotation more clearly.

3. Explain the significance of what you are quoting.
   Give the reader your assessment of the significance of what you've quoted. This does not mean that you have to say "this quote means…"; you can simply go on to state something relevant about the quoted material.

4. Include a formal citation.
   Be sure to use the appropriate citations style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)

Embedding quotations: Effectively using quotations does not solely depend on which words or sentences you quote, but also how you frame it within *your* sentence. When you correctly embed your quotation, you help the reader move smoothly from the quoted material back to your own writing.

In general, avoid leaving quotes as sentences unto themselves. Even if you have provided some context for the quote, a quote standing alone can disrupt your flow. Take a look at this example:

Hamlet denies Rosencrantz's claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression. "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2).

Standing alone, the quote's connection to the preceding statement is unclear. In order to incorporate a quote more clearly into your writing, consider the following:

- Lead into the quote with a colon.

  Hamlet denies Rosencrantz's claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression: "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2).

- Introduce or conclude the quote by attributing it to the author/speaker. You can also interrupt the quote with the attribution.

  Hamlet denies Rosencrantz's claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression. He states, "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2).

  When faced with a twelve-foot mountain troll, Ron gathers his courage, shouting, "Wingardium Leviosa!" (Rowling, p. 176).

  The Pirate King sees an element of regality in their impoverished and dishonest life.
  "It is, it is a glorious thing/To be a pirate king," he declares (Pirates of Penzance, 1983).

  "There is nothing either good or bad," Hamlet argues, "but thinking makes it so" (Hamlet 2.2).

- Always make sure that your quoted material is incorporated grammatically with the sentence in which it is used. In other words, if you took the quotation marks away, the grammar and punctuation of the sentence would be correct.

Note: You don't have to quote entire sentences if only a part of the material is relevant, but be sure that the meaning of your excerpt doesn't change when taken out of context of the entire sentence/passage.

For more on using and embedding quotations, go to **https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/quotations/**