

## Using Quotations

Ideas from your essay should primarily be your own. However, using direct quotations is an essential strategy to show that an authority supports your point. Other reasons to include quotations in your work are: to use in your hook sentence (the first sentence in your introductory paragraph); using a quotation can help the reader present a point or argument to critique or comment on; to include powerful or field related language; to present a known passage that would lose its meaning if it was paraphrased or summarized.

To help you determine when and how to use quotations, here are some important tips:

### **Ensure you are reproducing the exact wording, spelling, and punctuation of every quotation:**

- Even if the word is spelled wrong or a sentence is grammatically incorrect, you **MUST** type it out as is, because when you place quotation marks around something, you are indicating that you are reproducing the original product.
- If you notice an error of inconsistency, type out the error as is, and follow it up with the word [sic] in square brackets.

E.g., “It was the best of times, it was the blurst [sic] of times.”

### **Use the shortest quotation you can while making your point:**

- Since the dominant voice of your paper should be yours, **DO NOT** quote a paragraph when a sentence contains your main point. **DO NOT** quote a whole sentence when you can integrate a few words into one of your own sentences.
- Short texts should be indicated by using quotation marks at the beginning and end of your quotation.
- For multi-sentence texts, use an indented block-style paragraph form to offset your quotation.

### How to use punctuation with quotation marks:

- Parenthetical citations: With short quotations, place citations outside of the closing quotation marks, followed by sentence punctuation (period, question mark, comma, semi-colon, colon).

E.g., Mackenzie (2020) describes writing in academic English as “really freaking hard” (p. 6).

- Commas and periods: Place inside closing quotation marks when no parenthetical citation follows.

E.g., Mackenzie (2020) notes that “distance education is not new,” but because of Covid19, distance education may become “the new norm” (p. 10).

- Semi-colons and colons: Place outside of closing quotation marks (or after a parenthetical citation).

- Question marks and exclamation points: Place inside closing quotation marks if the quotation is a question/exclamation:

E.g., Menand (2001) acknowledges that H. W. Fowler’s Modern English Usage is “a classic of the language,” but he asks, “Is it a dead classic?” (p. 114).

**Note that a period still follows the closing parenthesis.**

Place outside of closing quotation marks if the entire sentence containing the quotation is a question or exclamation:

E.g., How many students read the guide to find out what is meant by “academic misconduct”?

- Quotations within quotations. Use single quotation marks for the embedded quotation:

E.g., According to Hertzberg (2002), Dahl gives the U. S. Constitution “bad marks in ‘democratic fairness’ and ‘encouraging consensus’” (p. 90).

**The phrases “democratic fairness” and “encouraging consensus” are already in quotation marks in Dahl’s sentence.**

- Use ellipsis points (. . .) to indicate an omission within a quotation - but not at the beginning or end, unless it’s not obvious that you’re quoting only a portion of the whole.

### **Never assume a quotation is self-explanatory:**

To get full marks for an assignment, a student must always explain and analyze why the quote they used in their assignment is important. Be as specific as possible. Remember, while the quote may be obvious to you, it may not be as obvious to the reader.

### **If you are quoting a character in a story, play, film, or poem, be sure to distinguish that character from the author:**

- Remember, **Hamlet** says, “To be or not to be,” **NOT** Shakespeare, and you **MUST** make that distinction clear.

### **Avoid using floating quotations - a sentence that begins with a quote - because it can cause confusion for the reader. The writer must always setup/introduce a quote before using it.**

Use a signal phrase to lead into your quotations to allow for a smoother transition between your words and the quotation:

- By introducing the author:

E.g., The author said ... Smith mentioned ... According to the author/Smith ...

- By introducing the source:

E.g., The most recent research indicates that ...

### **DO NOT use a quote out of context:**

E.g., The quote “Great minds think alike” has actually been taken out of context, even though it is now widely accepted that the meaning is: if someone else has the same idea as you, then it must be a good idea. However, the full original quote is: “Great minds think alike, but fools seldom differ.” The meaning behind this quote implies that one should look beyond the obvious and not think in the same way as everyone else. The established meaning now has been distorted and is a misrepresentation of the original meaning.

Finally, reference the source of your quotation BOTH within your writing and in your reference section! Go to the [Library website](#) to learn how to properly cite your work.

## References

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