

USING QUOTATIONS

When used appropriately and correctly, quotations provide evidence and further credibility. On the flip side, if they are misused they work *against* clarity and tone. Well-balanced writing uses evidence like quotations in moderation. When writing, use your own ideas and voice as much as possible; don't crowd your paper with quotation after quotation. *At least* two thirds of your writing should be your own ideas (if not more).

CHOOSE

Make your quotation selections carefully. If it's not supporting or strengthening your argument directly, then it's not needed. Even if the information is good, only quote when you can't say it better yourself, or when you require the original speaker's clout. If not, paraphrase. In fact, it's rarely necessary to quote an entire long passage; use only the necessary bits and paraphrase anything else. Remember, a quotation should match your tone and be relevant. A good quotation does the following:

- Supports or strengthens your claim or thesis
- Provides authority via the speaker

BOOKEND

In order to give it context and relevancy, a quotation should be bookended by an introduction and an explanation (i.e. introduce, quote, and then explain). Think of the two book ends as holding up your evidence. For instance, *Smith, a prominent researcher insists that "quotations are best used in a frame." He is not alone: writers seem to generally accept this pattern.*

Introduce

Introducing a quotation really just means introducing the speaker by last name. If it is the first mention of that speaker, credentials are also appropriate. Many different phrases work; here are a few:

- According to one researcher, John Smith, "___."
- Smith believed this. He says, "___."

When you are choosing a verb tense for your quotation introduction, remember that discussion of books and articles is in present tense (i.e. *Ophelia says* [not said]). When you are discussing historical events, use past tense (i.e. *Martin Luther King, Jr. said* [not says]). In all of your writing, make sure to be consistent in tense.

Quote

All direct quotations should be enclosed in quotation marks (""). All punctuation goes inside the quotation marks. (i.e. *"That's cool."*) Generally, the first letter in a quotation is capitalized (i.e. *He says, "Hi."*). However, if the quotation is a continuation of your sentence, it should be used without capitalization (i.e. *It's not important that "it happened yesterday."*). Also, if the quotation is interrupted and then continued, there is no need to capitalize the second part (i.e. *"It's not," Smith insists, "important."*).

Explain

When you quote it must be followed by some explanation placing it in the context of your thesis. Don't assume that a reader will understand why a quotation is relevant; summarize or explain it. Here are some good lead-ins for explanation:

- Smith argues, "___," proving that...
- According to Smith, "___." This indicates...

CREDIT

The most important thing to remember is that you *must* give credit to those whom you quote. Even when not using a specified citation style, like MLA, APA, or Chicago, indicate the author and origin. An un-credited quotation is plagiarism, which can have some severe consequences.