USING QUOTATIONS

SELECTING QUOTATIONS
You should never just pick a quote at random. All quotes in a paragraph or an essay should be there for a reason—generally, to support an assertion you have made. Don't quote just for the sake of quoting.

INTRODUCING A QUOTE
Quotes don't float. A quote is not island floating in the middle of your paragraph. You must introduce a quote or, if the source of the quote has already been made clear, incorporate it into your own sentence. When introducing a quote, some kind of information about the quotation is needed. Name the author, give his credentials, name the source, give a summary, or establish the context. You won't do all of these each time, but you should usually name the author.

> To establish ethos immediately in his speech, Patrick Henry says, "No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as the abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the house."

> In an article in *Time,* Fred Jackson writes that frogs vary in the degree of shyness they exhibit: "The arboreal tree frogs seem to be especially timid."

Use some variety in introducing quotations. Pick the quotation verb that seems in each case to fit your purpose most exactly. For example:

> In this essay Green tells us, "Hope increases courage."

Note that the particular verb you choose helps orient your reader toward your opinion of the statement. "Jones says" is neutral; "Jones informs us" is positive, "Jones alleges" is somewhat negative. Other verbs to choose from include:

says	adds	states	explains
writes	declares	comments	argues
observes	informs us	thinks	insists
notes	alleges	affirms	describes
remarks	claims	asserts	

BLEND IN QUOTES TO MAINTAIN YOUR OWN VOICE IN <u>YOUR</u> ARGUMENT
Remember that you are using quotations to serve *your* argument. Too many quotations, too many voices, can overpower your own. Quotations should fit into your argument, not appear out of thin air. They should be grammatically consistent with the rest of your essay. If punctuation, pronouns, and verb tenses don't flow with your own words, paraphrase and cite the needed material, or make minor changes within the quotation, surrounding them with brackets [ ]. All quotations should be unobtrusive.

In order to make your own writing flow as smoothly as possible, it's usually best to use only an effective part of a quotation as part of one of your own sentences. So instead of boring your reader with this:

> The narrator says, "Who can even imagine me looking a strange white man in the eye?" (232),

write something like this:

> The narrator asks if anyone could imagine her "looking a strange white man in the eye" (232).

And this:

> At one point the mother says, "I used to think [Dee] hated Maggie, too" (233),

is not as good an integration as this:

> At one point the mother admits that she "used to think [Dee] hated Maggie, too" (233).

FOLLOW UP QUOTATIONS WITH COMMENTARY

A sure sign that a student is trying to let another writer do his or her work is when that student ends a paragraph with a quote, as though nothing more needed to be said. If nothing more needed to be said, why is the student writing about it? NEVER end a body paragraph with a quote. ALWAYS follow up quotations with commentary that explains the quote and interprets it in the context of what it is you are arguing. Show the significance of the quote to your argument.

To integrate a quotation properly within a paragraph, a good writer may write one sentence to introduce the quotation, a second sentence that includes the quotation, and a third (and a fourth, fifth, sixth… if necessary) sentence to comment on the significance of the quotation. Here are some examples:

> **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.

Here's a longer example.

> In his book *Powwow Highway*, David Seals describes the main character's sister through typical stereotypes about Indians, and about Indian women in particular: "Nobility lay heavy on upon Bonnie Red Bird. It had been her destiny to be an Indian princess, and she had accepted that destiny. She had the immaculate auburn skin that made the Cheyenne among the most handsome of all the Plains Indians… [and] the restrained features that gave the Cheyenne a pure and peaceful look" (19). **With this introduction of Bonnie, Seals demonstrates the way that stereotypes about Indians have shaped Bonnie's perceptions of herself. She has modeled herself as an Indian princess within white society - which leads, ultimately, to her downfall. The implications are clear: Stereotypes, whether held by whites or Indians, have the power to destroy.**

LEAVING SOMETHING OUT OF A QUOTATION

Notice the ELLIPSES in some of the above quotations. Please notice that there ARE SPACES between each dot. Ellipses indicate, of course, that some unnecessary words have been left out of a quotation. Note that 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 or end of a sentence; only missing words from the middle of a sentence need to be indicated with an ellipsis.

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 Wangero.

> 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):

> The new and supposedly improved Dee tells her mother that she doesn't have to use her new name, Wangero, if she prefers not to.

Grammar and Quotations

A short quotation is a grammatical extension of the writer's own sentence, so when using quotations, it is important to remember to **punctuate correctly**. A comma separates brief, informal, grammatically incomplete introductions from quotations that complete the sentence.

Wrong: Prufrock says "I am no prophet – and here's no great matter" (Eliot 83).

Right: Prufrock says, "I am no prophet – and here's no great matter" (Eliot 83).

Use a colon to separate grammatically complete introductions or statements (complete sentences) from the quotation.

Wrong: Edith Hamilton describes Hera perfectly, "She was the protector of marriage, and married women were her peculiar care. There is very little that is attractive in the portrait the poets draw of her."

Right: Edith Hamilton describes Hera perfectly: "She was the protector of marriage, and married women were her peculiar care. There is very little that is attractive in the portrait the poets draw of her."

When integrating a quote into your sentence, keep all tenses the same. Change the tense in the quote to match the tense of your sentence. When you change words in a quote to your own words, be sure to put your words in brackets to let the reader know they are your words.

Wrong: While the legislators cringe at the sudden darkness, "all eyes were turned to Abraham Davenport" (239).

Right: While the legislators cringe at the sudden darkness, "all eyes [turn] to Abraham Davenport" (239).

Make sure your sentences are complete sentences and not fragments or run-ons.

Wrong: Yeats asks if, "before the indifferent beak." [incomplete sentence; makes no sense.]

Right: Yeats asks if Leda "put on [the swan's] knowledge" before his "indifferent beak could let her drop" (8).

Clarify pronouns that have no clear antecedents. You may know who the author is talking about, but your reader may need to be told. Do this by adding words in square brackets (as in the examples above and below).

Wrong: Captain Wentworth says, "It had been my doing – solely mine. She would not have been obstinate if I had not been weak" (45). [Who the heck is "she"?]

Right: Captain Wentworth says, "It had been my doing – solely mine. [Louisa] would not have been obstinate if I had not been weak" (45).

Make sure subjects and verbs agree.

Wrong: Wilfred Owen says that the only prayer said for those who die in battle is war's noise, which "patter out their hasty orisons" (17). [noise is singular; patter is plural]

Right: Wilfred Owen says that the only prayer said for those who die in battle are the noises of war, which "patter out their hasty orisons" (17).

When do you capitalize the beginning of a quote? Capitalize quotes that are grammatically complete. If the quote is a fragment (and could not be a complete sentence), do not capitalize.

Right: Captain Wentworth says, "It had been my doing – solely mine. [Louisa] would not have been obstinate if I had not been weak" (45).

Right: Yeats asks if Leda "put on [the swan's] knowledge" before his "indifferent beak could let her drop" (8).

The trouble with quotes on the internet is that it's difficult to determine whether or not they are genuine.

- Abraham Lincoln

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