



APSU Writing Center

Basic Rules for Quoting

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Resource: The Indiana University of Pennsylvania

- **Know *when* to use quotations:**
 - when language is especially vivid or expressive
 - when exact wording is needed for technical accuracy
 - when it is important to let the debaters of an issue explain their positions in their own words
 - when the words of an important authority lend weight to an argument

- **Know *how* to quote:**
 - You are not obligated to quote full sentences from a source.
 - You can paraphrase some of the material and/or directly quote only important extracted words.
 - Full paragraphs should never be quoted, especially for a short essay.

- **Use quotes to *support* your ideas, not to write or explain them for you:**
 - Since the body of your paper is intended to express your ideas, **paragraphs must begin and end with your ideas rather than with quotes.**
 - After you use a quote, follow with more discussion that elaborates, interprets, and/or reiterates its significance in relation to your ideas.
 - Quotes should **not** be used in opening or closing paragraphs.

- **Do not use quotes to puzzle piece ideas in a paper or use your ideas to validate the quotes:**
 - Quotes should validate your ideas.
 - Your ideas are the foundation of your paper, not the quotes.

- **Try not to overdo the quotations:**
 - If you include too many quotations in an essay, readers may form the impression that you cannot think for yourself.
 - Use direct quotations **only when a source is particularly clear or expressive.**
 - Avoid too many long quotations.



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- **Ease the reader into and out of a quotation:**
 - Use appropriate phrases that will smoothly lead into a quote.
 - When you use a quotation, help the reader make a **smooth transition** back into your own words.
 - Follow the quotation with a sentence or two of your own that reinforces or expands upon it.
 - The process should be so smooth so as to almost go unnoticed because the quotes blend in with your ideas.
- **Use correct punctuation with quotations:**
 - Quoted material is usually preceded by a **colon** if the quotation is **formally introduced** and by a **comma or no punctuation** if the quotation is an **integral part of the sentence structure**.
- **Avoid dropping quotations into your writing without warning the reader:**
 - Provide clear signal phrases that will introduce a quotation, paraphrased material, or a summary.
 - Quotes cannot stand as sentences on their own.
- **Make parenthetical (in-text) and Works Cited page citations work together:**
 - At all times, the author named in your parenthetical citation or signal phrase must correspond to the author named in your Works Cited page citation.
 - For example, if you incorrectly cited Samuel Johnson in the body of your paper, yet you have Samuel Boswell listed on your Works Cited page as that source, then your readers will be unable to reference the Johnson quote.