Tips on Introducing Quotes

General Principles

✎ Writers use quotations for a variety of purposes: to argue with another author's definition of a term, to provide statistical evidence or testimony to validate a claim; to present the reader with a statement the writer will refute or discuss in detail. If writers overdo and include too many quotations in a researched essay, readers will form the negative impression that the authors of those sources are more authoritative than the writer of the research paper. It is possible for the voices of those authorities to drown out the writer's voice, in a sense taking over authorship of the paper.

✎ Writers should use direct quotations only when the source's words are particularly relevant or powerful, or they represent an apt example of that specific author's thinking. A good policy is to use short quotes (no more than 25 words) and otherwise summarize or paraphrase sources whenever possible. When summarizing, however, be sure to represent the author accurately and fairly. If you must use a longer quotation (longer than 40 words in APA style or longer than four lines in MLA), follow the rules for formatting a *blocked quote*.

✎ When quotations are included, they should be an integral part of the text—a vital part of the discussion. Some warning signs that indicate a writer has lost control of his/her quotes include the following:

- **The Salting Syndrome:** If a reader can remove the quotes that have been "sprinkled" through the paper and still understand the essay, then the quotes are not an integral part of the essay and do not further the argument.

- **The Weak Weave:** If the reader sees only glimpses of a writer's voice as it introduces long quotations from others, he/she will assume the writer has lost control over the text and could become frustrated over not reading any original commentary.

- **The Overpowering Opinion:** If each paragraph begins with a quotation, the writer's voice will be lost as the powerful opinion of an "expert" occupies the slot in which readers often expect to find a focus statement that organizes the information to be presented in that paragraph.

- **The Dreary Design:** If each quotation is introduced using the same sentence structure and the same verb to indicate the author's opinion, readers will quickly become bored with the presentation and tune out the writer's message.

Introducing Quotes

When you include quotations, make sure that they are integrated smoothly into the argument, flow, and syntax of the paper without any logical or grammatical jolts. All borrowed ideas or words should be accompanied by a **signal phrase** that names the author or otherwise alerts the reader that the information is from a source.

✎ The best signal phrases connect the quote to the point you are trying to make:

- George Smith, another supporter of cloning and the President of the Human Cloning Foundation, believes that science fiction works have created hysteria in the popular media. **Smith argues,** "From *Frankenstein* to *The Sixth Day*, our popular media has done nothing but stir up the public's anxiety about monsters" (25). His views on the popular media tell us . . .
- A view that contradicts Smith's is articulated by John Brown, **who contends that** "God never intended for man to participate in his acts of creation. He will never condone our interference in his plan for us" (235). Brown makes it clear that . . .

Note that in each of these examples, the quotation is followed by commentary in which the writer further discusses the opinion or information presented. To allow for this in your writing, avoid ending a paragraph with a quote; instead, use another sentence or phrase to emphasize the importance or relevance of that quote for your purposes or thesis.

✎ Quotations must be integrated into a sentence and must agree with the grammatical structure of that sentence, even if the quote must be modified with brackets:

- Smith argues that the popular media "look only to the profit [they] can gain from the picture [they] paint of the cloning procedure" (27).

✎ Sentences containing quotes should be varied in structure for greater readability:

- In the words of researcher Herbert Terrace, ". . ." (page).
- As Flora Davis has noted, ". . ." ( ).
- The Gardners, Washoe's trainers, point out that " . . ." ( ).
- " . . . ," claims Noam Chomsky ( ).
- Terrance answers these objections with the following analysis: " . . ." ( ).

✎ Introductory clauses and phrases should always be logical and grammatical:

- NOT—In Smith's essay, he says " . . ."
- In Smith's essay, it says " . . . ", or
- Smith's essay states ". . . ",

Instead use

- In his essay, Smith states ". . . "

✎ When introducing a quote, add information about the author that will either establish his/her expertise or question his/her credibility or motives:
Smith, president of the NSS, argues that ". . . "
Jones, who seems to make a career out of disagreeing with Smith, has this to say: ". . ."

✎ The same strategy can be used to characterize a publication:
"*The National Review*, a publication well known for its conservative stance, includes Smith's opinions on a regular basis."

Introducing Quotes with Interesting Verbs

Verbs can be used to introduce summaries, paraphrases, and quotations that indicate the author's point of view on the topic, thus adding to the writer's rhetorical power.

In the sentence "Smith _____ that the flood might have been disastrous," filling in the blank with *observes, finds*, or *insists* would create different meanings.

Author is neutral	**Author implies or suggests**	**Author argues claims**	**Author is uneasy or disagrees**	**Author agrees**
comments	analyzes	contends	disparages	admits
describes	asks	defends	belittles	agrees
explains	assesses	disagrees	bemoans	concedes
illustrates	concludes	holds	complains	concurs
notes	finds	insists	condemns	grants
observes	predicts	maintains	deplores	
points out	proposes		deprecates	
records	reveals		derides	
relates	shows		laments	
reports	speculates		warns	
says	suggests			
sees	supposes			
thinks				
writes				

Quotation/Documentation Checklist

1. Are the name, title, and page headers and numbers formatted properly?
2. Does each direct quote have quotation marks around it?
3. Is the author's name included in the text or parenthetical citation for each summary, paraphrase, or quotation?
4. Is the page number included in the parenthetical cite, if available?
5. If no page number is available, has the paragraph number been included in the parenthetical citation?
6. Is the date included after the author's name in APA style essays?
7. Is the author referred to by his/her last name in the text?
8. Is the end punctuation placed outside the parenthetical citations?
9. Are long quotes used sparingly?
10. Are long quotes blocked and punctuated correctly according to the appropriate style manual's rules?
11. Are quotations introduced by the writer or simply dropped in?
12. Are the signal phrases that introduce quotes grammatically correct?
13. Are quotes introduced with meaningful verbs and followed up with relevant commentary of your own?
14. Is the sentence structure that contains quotations varied?
15. Do you see any of the four indications of lost control? (salting syndrome, weak weave, overpowering opinion, or dreary design)
16. Have you avoided beginning or ending paragraphs with quotations?