

UWF WRITING LAB
USING QUOTATIONS FROM SOURCES
Excerpted from Writing from Sources by Brenda Spatt

Basic Quotation

In academic writing, presenting the words of another writer is a basic method of supporting your own ideas. Quotation is a pivotal skill. Correct quotation tells your reader that you respect your sources, that you know how to distinguish between your own work and theirs, and that you will not make unacknowledged use of another writer's words and ideas, which is called plagiarism. Writers who understand when to quote understand the need to give credit to their sources both for borrowed ideas and borrowed words. Appropriate quotation tells your readers that you know how often to quote and that you are not allowing your sources' words to dominate your writing. Quotations should not be used indiscriminately. Experienced writers hold quotation marks in reserve for those times when they think it essential to present the source's exact words.

Gaining Distance Through Quotation

Writers may use quotation in order to incorporate some carefully chosen evidence into their essays and, equally important, to distinguish between the writer of the essay and the writer being cited in the essay. There are a few less important reasons for using quotation marks--reasons which also involve this concept of the distance between a writer and his sources of information. For example, you may want to use quotation marks to indicate that a word or phrase is not in common or standard use. A phrase may be obsolete, having been dropped from current usage--the young man announced his intention of "cutting a rug" at the party that evening--or slang, not having yet been absorbed into standard English--she tried to "cop out" of doing her share of the work. In effect, the writer wants to both use the phrase and at the same time "cover"

himself by signaling his awareness that the phrase is not quite right: he is distancing himself from his own vocabulary. It is usually better to take full responsibility for your choice of words and to avoid using slang or obsolete vocabulary, with or without quotation marks. But if the context requires such phrasing, you may use quotation marks to gain the necessary distance.

Direct Quotation: Separating the Quotation from Your Own Writing

The apparatus for quotation is two-fold: by inserting quotation marks, you distance yourself from certain words, as well as certain ideas, that appear in your writing; by inserting a citation containing the source's name, you give credit for both ideas and words to the original author.

Citation

Quotation

Somerset Maugham observed.

“To write simply is so difficult as to be good.”

The simplest way to quote is to combine the citation (written by you) with the words to be quoted (exactly as they were said or written by your source). This method-called direct quotation merely joins together or juxtaposes two quite separate statements, with punctuation (coma or colon) bridging the gap.

St. Paul declared, “It is better to marry than to burn.”

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul addressed lust: “It is better to marry than to burn.”

Direct and Indirect Quotation: Running Quotations into Your Sentences

You can construct a much more integrated sentence if you regard the quoted statement as the direct object of the verb:

St. Paul declared that “it is better to marry than to burn.”

In this kind of quotation, there is no signal for the reader to separate citation from quotation--no comma or colon, no capital letter; only the quotation marks indicate the presence of someone else's words. The very ordinary conjunction "that" bridges a gap which hardly exists. The effect is very smooth, and the reader's attention is not distracted from the flow of sentences. But because the complete integration of the quotation tends to blur the distinction between writer and source, one must be careful to avoid confusion. Look, for example, at the ways of quoting this first-person sentence, which was originally spoken (and not written) by a motorist: "I hate all pedestrians."

The motorist said, "I hate all pedestrians."

The motorist said that "I hate all pedestrians."

The first method, using punctuation, works well and requires no alteration in the original sentence. But in the second version, using "that," the original wording does not quite fit: the first-person "I" conflicts with the third-person "motorist"; one wonders who "I" is--the motorist or the writer! The present-tense "hate" also conflicts with the past-tense "said," and "hate" must be turned into "hated." But once the person and the tense of the original statement have been altered for the sake of clarity and consistency, only two words--"all pedestrians"--are actually being quoted:

The motorist said that she hated "all pedestrians."

If you decide not to put quotation marks around the two words taken from the original source, you are using indirect quotation, which is not true quotation:

The motorist said that she hated all pedestrians.

In indirect quotation, you report rather than quote what has been said.

Choosing Between the Three Kinds of Quotation

Direct quotation, without the use of “that,” is probably the most appropriate method of presenting the information above. The absence of quotation marks in the indirect quotation might in some cases lead to confusion: if one were collecting evidence for a libel suit, quotation marks would be necessary to indicate that the motorist was responsible for the precise wording. As a rule, the writer has the obligation to insert quotation marks when using the exact words of his sources, whether written or oral. When the phrasing of a quotation is especially apt or well-known or unique, placing quotation marks around the original words is especially important.

Direct quotation:

Robert Ingersoll proclaimed: “I am the inferior of any man whose rights I trample underfoot.”

Robert Ingersoll proclaimed that he was the inferior of any man whose rights he trampled underfoot.

The Punctuation of Direct Quotations

1. All periods and commas are placed inside the terminal quotation marks. It does not matter whether the period belongs to your sentence or to the quoted sentence: it must appear before the marks. This is the most important rule, and the one most often ignored.

P.T. Barnum is reputed to have said that “there’s a sucker born every minute.”

P.T. Barnum is reputed to have said that “there’s a sucker born every minute,” and Barnum’s circuses undertook to entertain each and every one.

2. All semi-colons, colons, and dashes belong after the quotation marks. They should be regarded as the punctuation for your sentence, and not for the quotation.

George Santayana wrote that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”; today, we are in danger of forgetting the lessons of history.

3. Questions marks and exclamation points are sometimes placed inside the quotation marks and sometimes placed outside. If the quotation itself is a question or an exclamation, the mark or point goes inside the quotation marks: if your own sentence is an exclamation or a question, the mark or point goes outside a quotation coming at the very end of your sentence.

It was General Sherman in 1864 who signaled: “Hold the fort! I am coming!”

Do you agree with Dumas that “woman inspires us to great things and prevents us from achieving them”?

Sigmund Freud’s writings occasionally reveal a remarkable lack of insight: “The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is: What does a woman want?”

Freud was demonstrating remarkably little insight when he wrote, “What does a woman want?” citing his “thirty years of research into the feminine soul”!

Interrupted Quotations

Sometimes it is desirable to break up a long quotation or to achieve variety in your sentence patterns by interrupting a quotation and placing the citation in the middle.

“I do not mind lying,” wrote Samuel Butler, “But I hate inaccuracy.”

Double Quotations

When a quotation incorporates a second quotation, you must use two sets of quotation marks, double and single, to help your reader distinguish between the two separate sources.

Goethe declared: “‘Know thyself?’ If I knew myself, I’d run away.”

The Need for Exactitude in Quotation

Quoting is not collaborative. The author spent time and effort to work out the original wording. If you value that wording enough to want to quote it, you should respect the integrity of the sentence and leave it intact. Don’t make minor changes or carelessly leave words out, but

faithfully transcribe the exact words, the exact spelling, and the exact punctuation that you find in the original.

Original:

Those who corrupt the public mind are just as evil as those who steal from the public purse.

Adlai Stevenson

Inexact quotation:

Adlai Stevenson believed that “those who act against the public interest are just as evil as those who steal from the public purse.”

Exact quotation:

Adlai Stevenson believed that “those who corrupt the public mind are just as evil as those who steal from the public purse.”

Even if you notice an error (or what you regard as an error), you must nevertheless copy the original wording accurately. Archaic spelling should be retained, as well as regional or national spelling conventions:

One of Heywood’s Proverbs tells us that “a new broom swepeth clean.” Standards of acceptable punctuation have also altered: if a comma or semi-colon looks incorrect, remember that it may be correct for the author’s era or locality.

Dr. Johnson believed that “it is better to live rich, than to die rich.”

Original:

It is better to be making the news than taking it; to be an actor than a critic.

Winston Churchill

Incorrect quotation:

Churchill observed, “It is better to be making the news than taking it;”.

Correct quotation:

Churchill observed, “It is better to be making the news than taking it.”

You do not have to assume the blame if there are errors of syntax, punctuation, or spelling in the material that you are quoting. A conventional device can be used to point out such errors and inform the reader that the mistake was made, not by you, but by the author whom you are quoting. The Latin word sic (meaning “thus”) is placed in square brackets and inserted immediately after the error. The [sic] signals that the quotation was “thus” and that you, the writer, were aware of the error, which was not the result of your own carelessness in transcribing the quotation.

In the following example, [sic] calls attention to an error in subject-verb agreement.

Richard Farson points out that “increased understanding and concern has [sic] not been coupled with increased rights.”

Tailoring Quotations to Fit Your Writing

There are several devices for making corrections and changes in quotations, so that the quoted material will fit in naturally with your own sentences. Like [sic], these devices are conventional: you cannot improvise; you must follow generally accepted rules. Usually, these conventional rules require you to inform your reader that changes are being made, in other words, to maintain the distinction between your wording and the author’s. The first way of altering quotations, however, does not require identification and depends entirely on how and where the quotation fits into your sentence. When your citation ends in “that,” you make the capitalization of the first word of the quotation conform to its grammatical position in your sentence: except in the case of proper nouns and the pronoun “I,” the first letter will be small, whether or not it is a

capital in the original. On the other hand, when your citation ends in a comma or a colon, the first letter of the quotation will be large, whether or not it is a capital in the original.

The poet Frost wrote that “good fences make good neighbors.”

The poet Frost wrote, “Good fences make good neighbors.”

As a rule, it is not necessary to indicate to your readers that you have altered a letter from small to large, or from large to small.

Using Ellipses

It is permissible to delete words from part of a quotation, provided that you use a symbol to indicate to the reader that there is an omission. Once aware that there is a difference between your version and the original, any reader who wants to check the omitted portion can consult the original source. Your condensed version is as accurate as the original; it is just shorter. But you must remember to insert the conventional symbol for deletion, three spaced dots, called ellipsis.

It is not true that suffering ennobles the character; happiness does that sometimes, but suffering, for the most part, makes men pretty vindictive.

W. Somerset Maugham

Maugham believes, “It is not true that suffering ennobles the character; [. . .]suffering, for the most part, makes men petty and vindictive.”

Notice that the semicolon is retained, to provide terminal punctuation for the first part of the quotation. Notice also that the three dots are spaced equally. (The dots must be three--not two or a dozen.) According to the 5th ed., MLA, brackets must be placed around the ellipses. There is no space between the bracket and first period. If you wish to delete the end of a quotation, and the ellipsis coincides with the end of your sentence, you must use the three dots, plus a fourth to signify the period.

Maugham believes, “It is not true that suffering ennobles the character; happiness does that sometimes. . . .”

Misusing Ellipses

Ellipses should be used to make a quotation fit more smoothly into your own sentence. It is especially useful when you are working with a long passage which contains several separate points that you wish to quote. Ellipses, however, were not intended as a device to condense long, tedious quotations or to replace summary and paraphrase. If all that you want to quote is a brief extract from a lengthy passage, then simply quote that portion and ignore the surrounding material. An ellipsis is poorly used when it calls attention to itself. For a reader to wade through a sea of dots can be very distracting. The meaning of the original quotation must always be exactly preserved, despite the deletion represented by the ellipsis.

As long as there are sovereign nations possessing great power, war is inevitable.

Albert Einstein

To simplify Einstein’s words might be tempting:

Einstein believes that “. . . is inevitable.”

But it would not be accurate to suggest that Einstein believed in the inevitability of war, under all circumstances, without qualifications. To extract only a portion of this statement is to oversimplify and thus to falsify the evidence.

Another common consequence of misapplied ellipses is a mangled sentence. Deleting words from a quotation can distort and destroy its syntax and structure.

God created woman. And boredom did indeed cease from that moment-but many other things ceased as well! Woman was God’s second mistake.

Women are certainly exciting. As Nietzsche declares, “God created woman . . . second mistake.”

Altering Quotations: Brackets

Brackets have a quite opposite function: ellipses signifies omission; brackets signify addition or alteration. You have already seen how to use brackets with sic, which is in fact a quoter’s addition to and comment on the quoted material. When you wish to explain a vague word, replace a confusing phrase, suggest an antecedent, correct an error in a quotation, or adjust a quotation to fit your own writing, you insert the information inside the quotation, placing it in square brackets. Brackets are not the same as parentheses. Parentheses are not suitable for this purpose, for the quotation itself might already have a parenthetical statement inside it, and the reader could not be sure which parentheses contained the author’s insertion and which contained yours. Instead, brackets, a relatively unusual form of punctuation, were chosen as the conventional symbol for inserted material.

The most common reason for using brackets is the clarification of an obscure word, frequently a pronoun. You may, for example, choose to quote only the last portion of a passage, and an important antecedent may be omitted:

Man lives by habits, indeed, but what he lives for is thrills and excitement.

William James

William James argues that “what he [man] lives for is thrills and excitement.”

You may also remove “he” entirely and replace it with man--in brackets:

“What [man] lives for is thrills and excitement.”

The brackets will indicate that there has been a substitution. But, unless the presentation of both wordings seems very awkward and clumsy, it is better to quote the original as well as the

clarification in brackets and thus provide your reader with all your source's words.

Citing the Author's Name

At the time of first reference, refer to the author by using his or her full name--without Mr. or Miss or Mrs. After that, cite the last name only. (If, however, there is a sizable gap between references to the same author, or if the names of several other authors intervene, you may wish to repeat the full name and remind your reader of the earlier citation(s).

First reference:

John Stuart Mill writes, "The opinion which it is attempted to suppress by authority may possibly be true."

Second reference:

Mill continues to point out that "all silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility."

By citing the last name only, you are conforming to conventional usage, which discourages overly familiar and distracting references like "John says," "JSA says," "JS says," or "Mr. Mill says." You may, however, at first reference include the title of the work from which the quotation was taken:

In On Liberty, John Stuart Mill writes . . .

Choosing the Introductory Verb

The citation leading up to the quotation represents an important link between your thoughts and those of your source. The introductory verb can tell your reader something about your reasons for presenting the quotation and its context in the work that you're taking it from. Will you choose "J.S. Mill says," or "J.S. Mill writes," or "J. S. Mill thinks," or "J.S. Mill feels"? Those are the most commonly chosen introductory verbs--so common that they become boring if they are used again and again. Try to get away from those stereotyped verbs, at least

occasionally. (And, since the senses are not directly involved in writing, avoid “feels” entirely.)

Here is a list of interesting possibilities:

insists	declares	suggests
argues	adds	proposes
concludes	explains	finds
states	agrees	continues
establishes	compares	disagrees
maintains	observes	notes

Of course, once you get away from the all-purpose category of “says” or “writes,” you have to remember that verbs do not have interchangeable meanings; you must choose the verb that best suits your purpose. The citation should prepare the reader for the quotation by suggesting in advance the relationship between your own issues (in the previous sentence) and the statement that you are about to cite. You must examine the quotation before writing the citation and define for yourself the spirit in which the author is making this point: is it being asserted forcefully? Use “argues” or “declares” or “insists.” Is the statement being offered only as a possibility? Use “suggests” or “proposes” or “finds.” Does the statement immediately follow a previous reference? Use “continues” or “adds.” For the sake of clarity, the introductory verb can easily be expanded into a slightly longer phrase:

- X is aware that . . .
- X stresses the opposite view:
- X provides one answer to the question:
- X makes the same point as Y:

But make sure that the antecedent for the “view” or the “question” or the “point” is quite clearly expressed in the previous sentences.

Varying Your Sentence Patterns

Even if you meticulously choose a different verb for each quotation, the effect of the

author's name-introductory-verb-quotation combination can become repetitious and tiresome after a while. One way to achieve some variety is to place the name of the source in a less prominent position, tucked into the quotation instead of calling attention to itself. You can interrupt the quotation by placing the citation in the middle.

“Knowledge is to two kinds,” points out Dr. Johnson; “we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it.”

Notice that the verb and the name can be placed in reverse order when the citation follows the beginning of the quotation.

One citation is quite enough. There is no need to inform your reader twice, back to back, as does this repetitive example:

“The only prize much cared for by the powerful is power,” states Oliver Wendell Holmes. He concludes, “The prize of the general . . . in command.”

Presenting an Extended Quotation

Occasionally, you may have reason to present an extended quotation, a single extract from the same source which runs for typewritten lines or more. For long quotations, set off the quoted passage by indenting the entire quotation on the left. Introduce an extended quotation with a colon.

1. Start each line of the quotation ten spaces from the left-hand margin; stop each line at your normal right-hand margin.
2. Triple-space before and after the quotation. Double-space within the quotation. (Some instructors prefer single-spacing for extended quotation.)
3. Do not use quotation marks to signify the beginning and end of the quoted passages; the indented margin (and the introductory citation) will tell your readers that you are quoting.

Here is an example of an extended quotation:

Although he worked “hard as hell” all winter, Fitzgerald had difficulty finishing The Great

Gatsby. In a letter to Maxwell Perkins, his editor at Scribner's, he wrote on April 10, 1924:

While I have every hope & plan of finishing my novel in June . . . even I=(if) it takes me 10 times that long I cannot let it go unless it has the very best I'm capable of in it or even as I feel sometimes better than I'm capable of. It is only in the last four months that I've realized how much I've--well, almost deteriorated. . . . What I'm trying to say is just that . . . at last, or at last for the first time in years, I'm doing the best I can.

Quoting Without Quotation Marks: Plagiarism

Quoting without quotation marks is called plagiarism. Even if you were to cite the source's name somewhere on your page, a quotation without marks would still be considered a plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another writer's words or ideas, and the only way to acknowledge that you are using someone else's actual words is with citation and quotation marks.

Paraphrase

Paraphrase is the point-by-point recapitulation of another person's ideas, expressed in your own words. By using paraphrase, you are proving to your reader that you understand the materials that you are writing about and have made them your own. Paraphrase is like summary in that both report your understanding to a reader; but, unlike a summary, a paraphrase covers a relatively short passage and reports everything in the passage, accurately, completely, and consecutively. When you paraphrase, you do not select, condense, interpret, or reorder the ideas; you retain everything about the original writing but the words.

1. Use paraphrase to present ideas or evidence whenever there is no special purpose to be gained from using a direct quotation.
2. Use paraphrase to give your readers a reliable and comprehensive account of ideas taken

from a source--ideas that you intend to explain, interpret, or disagree with in your essay.

Incorporating paraphrase Into Your Essay

The paraphrased ideas of other writers should never take control of your essay, but should always be subordinate to the points that you are making. Brevity in paraphrase is therefore often desirable, to prevent the source-material from dominating your writing and to enable the paraphrased sentence to be tucked into a paragraph in your essay.

Giving Credit to Your Paraphrased Sources

As you know by now, in academic writing the clear acknowledgment of the source is not merely a matter of courtesy or clarity, but an assurance of the writer's honesty. When you paraphrase another person's ideas, you must cite his or her name, as you do when you quote, or else you are subject to a charge of plagiarism. Borrowing ideas is just as much stealing as borrowing words. You leave off the quotation marks when you paraphrase, but you must not omit the citation. Of course, the insertion of the name should be smoothly integrated into your sentence, and, in writing the citation, you should follow the guidelines used for citation of quotations.

The source's name need not appear at the beginning of the sentence, but it should signal the beginning of the paraphrase:

Not everyone enjoys working, but most people would agree with Jones's belief that work is an essential experience of life.

This sentence depends on two sources: the writer of the essay is responsible for the declaration that "not everyone enjoys working" and that most people would agree with X's views, but the belief that "work is an essential experience of life" is attributed to X. The citation is unobtrusively

placed, and there are no quotation marks, so presumably X used a different wording.