

Writing Handout L-7: Quotation Customs

Blending quotes into an essay or research paper is called **in-text citation**. Follow your instructor's guidelines concerning precise citation requirements such as MLA or APA. The ASC offers specific handouts for these formats. The following information is a general guideline for integrating quotes into your writing.

Author's name: The first time you refer to an author, use the first and last name. In subsequent references, use the last name only. Do not use complimentary titles, such as Mr. or Mrs. In some cases, you might not know the author and might have to cite the name of an article.

Titles: Titles of short stories, most poems, and essays are placed inside quotation marks. Titles of novels, plays, books, and long poems are italicized.

To Quote or Not to Quote?

- Be **selective** when using quoted material. Does the quote bring any insight to the point you are trying to make? If not, consider a paraphrase. Either way, you must credit your source.
- Consider how you could **paraphrase** the quote. Would it bring the same insight as the quote? If so, then you probably do not need to quote, but you still must credit your source.
- Do not use **long quotes in short papers**. If your essay is only 350 words long, then you should not use a quote that is more than one or two lines long.
- **Limit quotes to special words or phrases** that are so well written or so insightful that there is no way to put them into your own words and get the same effect.
- **Quotes should not be more than 20% of a finished paper**. Otherwise, it looks like you connected a bunch of quotes with a few of your sentences.

Using Quotes Correctly

- **You cannot simply insert a direct quote between two of your own sentences. This is called a "drop quote."** Here is an example of a drop quote: Dick is an evil man. "He killed nine people that day." Dick's evil side took over.
Here is the correct format of the above example:
Dick is an evil man because "he killed nine people that day."
- **All quotes should be introduced or followed by your own words.** Preferably, you want to *blend* your words with those from your source so there is a seamless connection.

Four Methods of Blending Quotations into Sentences

1. Introduce a quotation with a complete sentence and a colon.

Example: In *Desert Solitaire*, Edward Abbey states his purpose for solitary journeys into the wilderness: "I find that in contemplating the natural world, my pleasure is greater if there are not too many others contemplating it with me at the same time."

Example: Abbey's philosophy might be summed up best by his desire for people to understand the need for preserving the wilderness: "Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit and as vital to our lives as water and good bread."

Example: Abbey ends his essay with an admonition: "Anarchism is not a romantic fable but the hardheaded realization, based on five thousand years of experience, that we cannot entrust the management of our lives to kings, priests, politicians, generals, and county commissioners."

2. Use an introductory or explanatory phrase, but not a complete sentence, separated from the quotation with a comma.

Example: In *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey explains his purpose for going into the wilderness when he says, "I find that in contemplating the natural world my pleasure is greater if there are not too many others contemplating it with me, at the same time."

Example: Abbey suggests the consequences of following conventional wisdom when he says, "Where all think alike, there is little danger of innovation."

Example: Abbey asks, "Has joy any survival value in the operations of evolution?"

Example: According to Abbey, "A patriot must always be ready to defend his country against his government."

Note: You should use a comma to separate your own words from the quotation when your introductory or explanatory phrase ends with a verb such as "says," "said," "thinks," "believes," or "asks" (and many more). You should also use a comma when you introduce a quotation with a phrase such as "According to Abbey."

3. Make a quotation a part of your own sentence without any punctuation between your own words and the words you are quoting.

Example: In *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey states his purpose for going into the desert when he says that "I find that in contemplating the natural world my pleasure is greater if there are not too many others contemplating it with me, at the same time."

Example: Abbey suggests the consequences of following conventional wisdom, stating that when people "all think alike, there is little danger of innovation."

Example: Abbey argues that the "tragedy of modern war is that the young men die fighting each other - instead of their real enemies back home in the capitals."

Example: According to Abbey, modern man tends to "seal himself off from the natural and isolate himself within a synthetic prison of his own making."

Notice that the word "that" is used in three of the examples above. In these examples, "that" replaces the comma that would be necessary without the word "that" in the sentence. You usually have a choice when you begin a sentence with a phrase such as "Abbey says." You either can add a comma after "says" (Abbey says, "quotation"), or you can add the word "that" with no comma (Abbey says that "quotation.")

4. Use short quotations--only a few words--as part of your own sentence.

Example: In *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey states that his "pleasure is greater" when he is alone.

Example: Abbey argues that wilderness is necessary because people need to know that they have a refuge "even though we may never need to go there."

Example: Abbey believes that fearful societies "are doomed to quick extinction" and that without courage, "all other virtues are useless."

Note: When you integrate quotations in this way (#4), you do not use any special punctuation. Instead, you should punctuate the sentence just as you would if all of the words were your own. No punctuation is needed in the sentences above because the sentences do not follow the pattern explained in numbers 1 and 2: There is not a complete sentence in front of the quotations, and a word such as "says," "said," or "asks" does not appear directly in front of the quoted words.

REMINDER: For further clarification concerning exact quotation styles, such as MLA or APA, Please consult an Academic Support Center tutor or the ASC Web site.

Special Situations

When you use quotations, you must use the author's exact words, interior punctuation, and spelling. Some exceptions to this general rule include ellipsis points and brackets. The following examples show the general rules. For specific citation styles, such as MLA or APA, please request ASC handouts.

***Ellipsis:** You may omit part of the author's words as long as you do not change the author's meaning and use ellipsis points (three spaced periods for omitted material within a sentence and four spaced periods for omitted material between sentences). Ellipses are not required at the beginning or end of quotation unless needed for clarification.

***Brackets:** Brackets are used to enclose a word for clarification that was not in the original source.

Examples

Czeisler writes, "The timing of the light . . . had to be synchronized [sic] with particular phases of a person's circadian rhythm in order for it to be effective."

Circadian rhythms are "[biological] processes that occur repeatedly on approximately a twenty-four hour cycle.

Note: Ellipsis points are used to show that some of the author's words have been omitted. The brackets enclosing "sic" are used to indicate that the word "synchronized" was misspelled in the original source, and the brackets enclosing "biological" are used to show that this word was not in the original source.

Long quotes

MLA (more than four typed lines)

- *Introduce the quotation with a signal phrase containing the author's name and an appropriate verb, followed by a colon.
- *Indent the entire quotation one inch from the left margin.
- *Use the normal right margin and double space.
- *Do not put quotation marks around the indented quotation.
- *Place the page number in parentheses following the closing punctuation mark.
- *If the signal phrase does not contain the author's name and publication date, put the author's name and page number in parentheses after the closing punctuation mark.

Environmentalist author Edward Abbey explains his beliefs:
Men come and go, cities rise and fall, whole civilizations appear and disappear-the earth remains, slightly modified. . . . I sometimes choose to think, no doubt perversely, that man is a dream, thought an illusion, and only rock is real. Rock and sun. (72)

APA (more than 40 words)

- *Introduce the quotation with a signal phrase containing the author's last name, the publication date in parentheses, and an appropriate verb, followed by a colon.
- *Indent the entire quotation ½ inch from the left margin.
- *Use the normal right margin and double space.
- *Do not put quotation marks around the indented quotation.
- *Place the page (or paragraph) number in parentheses following the closing punctuation mark.
- *If the signal phrase does not contain the author's name and publication date, put the author's name, publication date, and page number in parentheses after the closing punctuation mark.

Environmentalist author Edward Abbey (1960) explains his beliefs:
Men come and go, cities rise and fall, whole civilizations appear and disappear-the earth remains, slightly modified. The earth remains, and the heartbreaking beauty where there are no hearts to break. . . . I sometimes choose to think, no doubt perversely, that man is a dream, thought an illusion, and only rock is real. Rock and sun. (p. 72)