



Using and Framing Direct Quotations

When used properly, quotations can add authority, persuasion, and strength to your argument. However, quotations should only supplement your argument. Don't make an argument of only quotations – then it's not *your* argument. Getting the hang of using quotations correctly can be tricky. The guidelines below will help you. Remember that all quotes must be properly cited.

Usage

Quote a person who:

- Is an authority in a field related to your issue. For example, if you were writing a paper about Jane Austen, you could quote another well-respected author.
 - “Jane Austen is the pinnacle to which all other authors aspire,” according to international bestselling author J.K. Rowling.
- Is in a position that would strengthen your argument. For example, if you were examining how the people in New Orleans felt when Hurricane Katrina hit, any person who was there would be a credible source.
 - New Orleans resident Ihsan Mahdi said, “Now I have a taste of what people in war ravaged countries go through.”
- Uses vivid or memorable language that would lose power if paraphrased.
 - “Yesterday, December 7, 1941 – a day which will live in infamy – the United States was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the empire of Japan.” – Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s speech after the Pearl Harbor attack
- Has a unique idea or point of view.
 - Karl Marx famously wrote, “Religion is the opiate of the masses.”

Avoid direct quotes if the language or idea is mundane or ordinary.

- Chuck Norris said, “My name is Chuck Norris.”
- “The American Revolution began in 1776.”
- “There are 435 members of the House of Representatives and 100 members of the Senate.”

Framing

Framing is a fancy name for fitting quotations into your writing. It is almost always a good idea to frame your quotes and provide analysis.

The most straightforward method of framing quotes is to use **speaker tags** (also called **attributive tags** or **lead-in verbs**) at the beginning, middle, or end of a quote. As the name implies, these tags tell your reader about the speaker.

As actress Mae West quips, “Too much of a good thing is wonderful.”

Another option is to embed the quote into the sentence:

Roald Dahl believes that “a little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men.”

Block quotes are quotations of more than four lines. They should be used rarely and only when omitting part of the quote would hurt its power. In MLA style, block quotes should be double-spaced and indented one inch on the left (10 spaces). Sentences preceding a block quote should introduce the speaker and context. The sentence immediately preceding a block quote is punctuated with a colon or period.

See the MLA Documentation Format handout or a handbook for citation details.

Rhetorical uses of framing quotes:

Framing can do much more than provide simple attribution. The way you frame quotes can also indicate your stance on the issue at hand, and how the quote contributes to the overall argument of your paper. The examples below show very different ways of framing Gloria Steinem’s observation, “I have yet to hear a man ask for advice on how to combine marriage and a career.”

As legendary feminist Gloria Steinem said, “I have yet to hear a man ask for advice on how to combine marriage and a career.”

Gloria Steinem’s opinion may have held sway in the 1960s, but it does not apply today: “I have yet to hear a man ask for advice on how to combine marriage and a career.”

Analysis:

Never use a quote without analyzing it. To analyze, explain how the quote fits into your argument.

Citations: All direct quotations must be properly cited in standard academic writing. Please consult your instructor, relevant handbooks, UWC consultants, or handouts if you have questions about how to cite your quotes.