

QUOTING IN ESSAYS

An author's exact words should be enclosed in quotation marks. The focus of your essay should be on *your* understanding of the topic. If you include too much quotation in your essay, you will crowd out your own ideas. Consider quoting a passage from one of your sources if any of the following conditions holds:

- The language of the passage is particularly elegant, powerful, or memorable.
- You wish to confirm the credibility of your argument by enlisting the support of an authority on your topic.
- The passage is worthy of further analysis.
- You wish to argue with someone else's position in considerable detail.

Familiarize yourself with the various verbs commonly used to introduce quotations. Here is a partial list:

argues	writes	points out	concludes	comments	notes
maintains	suggests	insists	observes	counters	implies
states	claims	demonstrates	says	explains	reveals

or phrases such as:

In the words of _____

According to _____

In _____ view,

A direct quotation is not the same thing as a line of dialogue. Exact words from a source must be interwoven into your own text by placing the phrase at the beginning, middle, or end of your sentence.

ORIGINAL TEXT: "Jay Gatsby is portrayed as a dreamer and optimist whose dream is beyond his reach."

WOVEN QUOTATION: Gatsby's attempt to marry Daisy supports critic Jane Smith's belief that he is "a dreamer and optimist whose dream is beyond his reach" (25).

HOW DO I INTRODUCE A SHORT QUOTATION?

The following offers just one way of introducing a short quotation.

ORIGINAL TEXT: "Hence we must turn to Roman antiquity to find the first justification of war, together with the first notion that there are just and unjust wars" (Arendt 12).

INTRODUCING THE TEXT: The ancient Greeks never saw any need to justify wars that were waged outside the walls of the city state. As Hannah Arendt points out in *On Revolution*, "we must turn to Roman antiquity to find the first justification of war, together with the first notion that there are just and unjust wars" (12). Yet the Roman conception of a just war differs sharply from more modern conceptions.

Notice the different ways of quoting in the following examples:

1. Nietzsche's energy is unmistakable: "At this point I cannot suppress a sigh and a last hope. What is it that I especially find utterly unendurable? That I cannot cope with, that makes me choke and faint? Bad air! Bad air!" (917).
2. "I cannot suppress," Nietzsche says, "a sigh and a last hope" (917).
3. What did Nietzsche mean when he complained about "bad air" (917).

HOW DO I INTRODUCE A LONG QUOTATION?

If your quotation is lengthy, you should almost always introduce it with a full sentence that helps capture how it fits into your argument. If your quotation is longer than **FOUR** lines, do not place it in quotation marks. Instead, set it off as a **BLOCK QUOTATION**.

Although Dickens never shied away from the political controversies of his time, he never, in Orwell's view, identified himself with any political program:

The truth is that Dickens's criticism of society is almost exclusively moral. Hence his lack of any constructive suggestion anywhere in his work. He attacks the law, parliamentary government, the educational system and so forth, without ever clearly suggesting what he would put in their places. Of course it is not necessarily the business of a novelist to make constructive suggestions, but the point is that Dickens' attitude is at bottom not even destructive.

(Orwell, 416).

Long quotations almost always need to be followed by extended explanation. Never allow a quotation to do your work for you. It is also a good idea to avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation.

QUOTING FROM A LITERARY WORK

General Procedures

1. Be sure the selected quotation is both relevant and effective within the body of your essay.
2. Quoted material must correspond **exactly** with the original in wording, spelling, and punctuation. Re-check all quoted material against original source to ensure absolute accuracy.
3. Avoid excessive quotation. Your own ideas and analysis are the foundation of the essay; quotations are the support or proof.
4. Ellipsis dots may be used to indicate words omitted from a quoted passage. However, the quotation **must** make sense even without the omitted words.
5. Brackets [] - must be used to indicate any changes made within the original quotation. This may be necessary on occasion to clarify certain material.
6. Enclose all quoted material used in the body of the essay in double “ ” quotation marks. Single ‘ ’ quotation marks are used **only** for quotations within quotations.

Specific Cases and Examples

1. Short direct quotations of verse or prose should be incorporated within the double spaced text of the essay.
EG. In a passage describing Brian with his new puppy, we learn he is a sensitive boy who feels and thinks deeply: “Within himself, Brian felt a soft explosion of feeling. It was one of completion and of culmination,” (78).
EG. Birney’s ability to create a visual image, as well as his use of alliteration, is demonstrated in the line, “. . . a sunlit spire on Sawback,” (l. 7).
2. When quoting two or three lines of poetry within the body of the essay, use an oblique stroke / to indicate the line endings within the passage. Capitalization and punctuation of the original remains the same.

EG. As stated in the Prelude, Wordsworth returned to Cambridge " Without repining from the coves and heights / Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern," (VI, 10-11).

EG. One of the most famous passages in the English language begins with the lines, "To be, or not to be, that is the question; / Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," (III, i, 56-58).

3. Quotations of more than three lines of poetry or four lines of prose must be **blocked**.

- a) Beginning on a new line, indent the quoted passage from both the left and right margins (10 spaces).
- b) Single space the quoted material.
- c) Do not use quotation marks.
- d) Quote verse using original line formation.

EG. When Brian is four years old, he first encounters the Young Ben on the prairie. It is significant that the wind is part of the description of this encounter; the wind and the Young Ben are connected, perhaps as symbols of the freedom of the wide prairie.

And all about [Brian] was the wind now, a pervasive sighing through great emptiness, unhampered by the buildings of the town, warm and living against his face and in his hair.

Then he saw a strange boy - one who came from behind him soundlessly, who stood and stared at him with steady gray eyes . . .

Brian was not startled; he simply accepted the boy's presence out here as he had accepted that of the gopher and the hawk and the dragonfly.

'This is your prairie,' Brian said (11)

EG. It is evident in the Prologue that the narrator's descriptions of the various pilgrims are more than simply descriptions. It is through the narrator's words that Chaucer presents for the reader a commentary on both human and social folly in the Middle Ages. For example, the description of the prioress is far more fitting of a courtly lady than it is of a female clergy member:

Ful semely hir wympul pynched was,
Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed.
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe
For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.
(149 - 154).



