

QUOTING SOURCE MATERIALS

When integrating sources into academic writing, writers can quote, paraphrase, or summarize the original source material. This handout will focus on quoting.

It is best to quote a source when highlighting the specific language and idea(s) of the original author. Quoting helps the reader understand the exact idea from the source without having to rely on your interpretation of that idea. Scientific facts can be paraphrased, and story lines can be summarized, because they don't require keeping the original language of the source.

Paraphrased or summarized passages do not show how a specific idea, person, place, or thing was presented by the author. When the language should be presented to express a concept or the author's language, use a direct quote.

6 STEPS TO QUOTE EFFECTIVELY

1. Copy and paste the original text into your paper

To quote a source, copy the text directly from the original source exactly as it appears in that text and paste it into your writing.

2. Put quotation marks around your text

You will place quotation marks (“ ”) at the beginning and the end of the copied text. The only time you do not do this is if you insert a quote that is long enough to be a block quote.

3. Attribute the source

When you use a quote, you need to attribute it or show what the original source was. To do this, you will add a citation and possibly a signal phrase. In the below examples we use MLA style for the citations. You should check your style guide for instructions on how to format the in-text citation.

Quote with only an in-text citation

Example: Tolkien is “dismissively associating women with weakness” (Green 189).

Quote with an in-text citation and a signal phrase

Example: For instance, Green observes, “Living women are mentioned once in the book” (189).

Note that the signal phrase (“Green observes”) is followed by a comma and the first letter of the first word is capitalized. Because the author's name is in the sentence, it does not appear in the in-text citation.

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4. Make sure the language of the quote fits your sentence

You need to make sure that you build the quote into the grammar of your sentence. Doing so might require changes to the direct quote. Below we see two ways of integrating the same quote into a sentence. In the first, the writer adjusts their own sentence to fit the grammar of the quote; in the second, the writer makes a change to the quote, which is noted by using brackets ([]), to fit the grammar of their sentence.

Example: Green notes the sexism inherent in this description, commenting that Tolkien is “dismissively associating women with weakness” (189).

Example: He notes that Tolkien “dismissively associat[es] women with weakness” (Green 189).

5. Tie the quote to your ideas

You must help the reader understand how the ideas and language in the quote relates to the points you are making in your paper. This connection can sometimes be made with a short phrase, or you might need to write as many as a few sentences depending on how what the quote’s significance is to your ideas.

6. Add a Reference Page citation

Remember that any source you quote in your paper needs to be cited in the text and on your Bibliography, Works Cited, or References page. Check your style guide for instructions on how to format that entry.

BLOCK QUOTE

One important distinction to note about the formatting of your quote is that if you quote a long piece of text, you might need to use a block quote.

Different style guides have different requirements for how long a quote should be to use a block quote. Check your style guide for formatting instructions.

The below example uses MLA format, in which block quotes are four lines or longer. In it we see the sentence that introduces the block quote, the block quote, and the beginning of the sentence that follows the block quote:

Example: Green notes how Tolkien’s language creates a world with inherent problems that stems from the lack of female characters:

This line, dismissively associating women with weakness, is the sole reference to women existing in the story—indeed the only mention of any character younger than fifty. *The Hobbit* is a story of old kings without queens, courts without ladies, towns of men and blurry others. Even eagles, horses, wolves, goblins, spiders, and dragons are, according to pronouns, all masculine—an unnatural condition. (Green 189)

This all-male reality ends up not being entirely successful as we see Bilbo and his companions...

Note that you do not use quotation marks if you use a block quote and some of the other formatting elements might also change. Be aware also that you will rarely end a paragraph with a block quote (or any quote) because you will need to tie the ideas and language from the quote back to the points in your paper.