



## USING QUOTATIONS IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Writing a research paper requires reading other materials that both support and contradict your theories. Reading information which supports both sides of your argument is part of becoming informed with the breadth of the field. Academic conversations are qualified through “balanced” presentation. By using references and quotations in your paper, you are providing proof of your knowledge and its legitimacy. When you write a paper, you are adding your thoughts to an ongoing conversation (among researchers) on a specific topic, providing additional ideas.

When should you quote your sources? There are several instances that require you to use reference materials.

- ◆ Quoting sources proves you’ve done your research and grants credibility to your thesis and thought process.
- ◆ They provide the reader with access to your sources, if they want more information.
- ◆ Referencing your sources shows that you have thought through the assignment and made efforts to gather more information.
- ◆ References support your arguments and concepts, providing them with validity.

### Writing tip:

Quotes also provide variety to your writing, breaking up your thoughts and boosting your arguments.



## Using Quotations in your Work

- ◆ Quotes should be used to reinforce your statements, but they should also be used sparingly. They are there to support, not to take the place of, your ideas.
- ◆ Quotes should be inserted where they add something to your writing. Don't put them in just to take up space.
- ◆ Only insert as much of the quote as is needed. Don't paste in a longer amount of text in order to make your paragraph or paper longer.
- ◆ Introduce and explain your quote and why you have added it to your writing. If the reader doesn't understand why you've included the quote, they will ignore it and your ideas will lose their legitimacy.

### Writing tip:

Include an add-in sentence that introduces and/or explains your quote, to provide your reader with context and interpretation, as necessary.

## How to Cite your Sources

- ◆ If you are including a direct quote from someone else's work, you must surround it with quotation marks, and include it in your references.
- ◆ If you are paraphrasing ideas from someone else, no matter in what format, you still must reference it.
- ◆ If something is considered "common knowledge," it is not necessary to cite it.



## Writing tip:

Plagiarizing (not appropriately crediting someone else's words or ideas by using in-text citations, or re-using your own words or ideas from a different class) is considered a form of cheating by most universities because you are not acknowledging other's original ideas. Most colleges and universities have strict policies. This violation of academic integrity could result in severe punishment by failing your class, academic suspension, or even expulsion.

## Using Quotation Marks: MLA Style

There are rules for using quotation marks that are common across most style guides. Check with your professor to find out what style they prefer, as they differ across fields. Below are basic rules (using the book format, MLA style). We used Janet Burroway's *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, Fifth Edition as our source.

- ◆ Quote exactly. Do not change words, punctuation, or sentences, unless noted (see below).

"Part of the atmosphere of a scene or story is its setting, including the locale, period, weather, and time of day." (Burroway 169)

- ◆ If you change the quote at all, this must be identified with the proper notation, i.e., omission of words with ellipses (...), emphasis with *italics*, and changes with [square brackets].

"Part of the atmosphere...is [the story's] setting, including the *locale*, period, weather, and time of day." (Burroway 169, emphasis added)

- ◆ When a quotation would normally include a period or comma, the punctuation goes before the closing quotation mark, even if the



punctuation is not part of the original text; semicolons and colons go outside the closing quotation mark.

Burroway discusses the idea of atmosphere to include “period, weather, and time of day”: not just the scenery. (169)

- ◆ Questions marks go inside the quotation marks if part of the text, but outside if they are part of your writing.
- ◆ A writer might ask “how do I include ‘locale, period, weather, and time of day’ all in my setting description?”
- ◆ If you’re including a quote within a quote, it uses ‘single quotation marks’.
- ◆ Quotes with four lines or longer should be formatted as an indented block quote, separate from the text. Keep the original punctuation and reference the material at the end. Quotation marks aren’t needed.

As noted by Burroway, there is more to atmosphere than the phrase “it was a dark and stormy night”:

Part of the atmosphere of a scene or story is its setting, including the locale, period, weather, and time of day. Part of the atmosphere is its tone, an attitude taken by the narrative voice that can be described in terms of a quality—sinister, facetious, formal, solemn, wry. The two facets of atmosphere, setting and tone, are often inextricably mixed in the ultimate effect: A sinister atmosphere might be achieved partly in syntax, rhythm, and word choice; partly by night, dampness, and a desolated landscape. (Burroway, 169)



## Writing Tip:

If you aren't sure whether you should cite a work, ask yourself where the idea came from. If you didn't think of it, then it mostly likely came from elsewhere and needs to be cited, whether it is a summary, paraphrase, or quote.

## How to Avoid Plagiarism

- ◆ Keep track of all your sources as you use them.
- ◆ Take good notes so you know which ideas came from which sources.
- ◆ Copy down the citation for each source and create a bibliography as you go.
- ◆ Keep track of which words are from the source and which are your own.
- ◆ This includes all sources: web, video, book, pdf, email, interviews, Instagram, Twitter, etc.

*Created by Lisa M. Trahan, MFA, TESOL*