

Sources: Quoting

There are many ways to include ideas from outside sources. In this section of the textbook, we will focus on quoting.

Sources are used to add credibility and emphasis to your essay. When you read about your topic to prepare to write, you will want to make notes of specific sources that influenced your position on the topic and the supporting details you chose for support. After you have decided that information from the original source would be best to include word-for-word, you will follow these steps.

Choosing a quote

The first step is to read about your topic in reputable sources. If you are unsure if a source is trustworthy, talk with either your writing or reading teacher.

While you are reading, create a system for saving the information that is helpful for creating your essay structure and developing your ideas. You may choose to do this with sticky notes, the copy/paste function in a word document, or highlighting. At this stage, you will find larger sections of text that you won't actually use directly in your writing.

Once you have created your essay outline, you can begin to connect these sources you identified as helpful to specific paragraphs.

For quoting, you will need to focus in a small section of the source (up to 40 words, but typically shorter) that will strengthen your main idea and supporting details. Quotes are best used when the original words from a source are:

- already fairly concise and does not need to be condensed
- best supports your topic sentence when preserving the author's original wording and authority
- not easily said in another way
- powerfully stated (highly persuasive or emotional)

You should not quote large blocks of text (more than 40 words), especially in a short essay. You want the majority of the writing in an essay to be your own words, not a quote of someone else.

Below is an example of an original paragraph-length source which was narrowed down to a relevant and precise quotation that could be added to a paragraph.

Example: Original Passage

In his book *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941*, Robert S. McElvaine describes the myriad of socioeconomic, political, and market forces that culminated in what would become the most jarring domestic crisis in modern American history.

Reference:

The Great Depression and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The great gatsby: [essay example], 1390 words. GradesFixer. (2022, November 17). Retrieved April 14, 2023, from <https://gradesfixer.com/free-essay-examples/fitzgeralds-prediction-and-the-great-depression/>

Example: Quote

"the myriad of socioeconomic, political, and market forces that culminated in what would become the most jarring domestic crisis in modern American history" (McElvaine, 1929, p. 50).

After you have chosen what part of the source to use for your quote, you will need to put those exact words in quotation marks " " and include the in-text citation in parentheses (Author, year, page/paragraph #). If you quote only a part of a sentence, you should use ellipses ... to show where there is information missing.

Example: Quote with Ellipses

"the myriad of socioeconomic, political, and market forces ... would become the most jarring domestic crisis in modern American history" (McElvaine, 1929, p. 50).

Introducing a quote

Even though the quotation uses someone else's words, the essay or written piece you are adding it to is still your writing. This means a quote should not just be dropped into the middle of a paragraph. There need to be transitions in and out of a quote to show that it is there for a specific purpose other than to meet the assignment rubric expectation of a certain number of sources. Good writing requires you to show that the source is used strategically to enhance your writing.

You will never just copy and paste a quote by itself. When you use a quote, it will be part of a sentence and will usually be followed by a sentence you wrote to explain its importance to the main idea in some way.

Example: Quote in context

In recent years, "dozens of giant landslides, some with debris extending more than 200 km from their source, have been recognized along the Hawaiian ridge and around other oceanic volcanoes" (Garcia, 2015, p. 13). **This situation provides excellent opportunities to study the cause of these landslides because they are so frequent.**

The introduction you decide to use for the quote will vary depending on your purpose in using those words. Here are some possible reasons why an author may choose to include a direct quote for support:

- The original author is well-known and respected, so using exact words inspires confidence. Additionally, the author's perspective on the matter is considered to be unique and relevant.
- The source emphasizes information in terms of chronology, meaning that the quote connects a supporting idea to a specific point in time.
- The location of the source adds depth to the position because of the narrow focus of the thesis or to show the scale of the topic.
- The information itself is clearly stated, concise, and strong (or uses very specialized terminology) and says something that needs to be said exactly that way.
- The idea is new, unexpected, or contrary to the common belief that it is necessary to show how it was originally said.

The reason for including the quote can often decide how it would be best introduced. Here are some examples of how each of the above purposes could be introduced based on purpose:

- Author:
 - The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once said...
 - A close friend of Jim Henson described him as...
- Time:
 - In 2008, the New York Times stated...
 - Just before the incident, an employee of NASA reportedly said that...
- Place:
 - Speaking of Apartheid South Africa, Nelson Mandela said...
 - Australian officials describe the negative impacts of holding the Olympics as...
- Precision:
 - In fact, some of the Taíno words we use today include...
 - He explained his writing best when he said...
- Uniqueness:
 - Surprisingly, some citizens opposed renaming the city in tribute to her because...
 - The correspondence that was recently discovered provided the following insight...

The introduction you choose to write will be outside of the quotation marks ". The exact words you are quoting will go inside the quotation marks ". See the example below.

Example: Introduced Quote

In **recent years**, "dozens of giant landslides, some with debris extending more than 200 km from their source, have been recognized along the Hawaiian ridge and around other oceanic volcanoes" (Garcia, 2015, p. 13).

These introductions precede the quote to create a bridge between your own supporting ideas and the additional perspective of your source. By smoothly incorporating someone else's words into your own, you remain in control of the essay.

Commenting on the quote

Just as you needed to create a bridge from your original thought into the direct quote using an introduction, you will need to transition back to your own words. The most effective way to do this is to elaborate on why this quote is relevant. Even if the reasons for including the source feel obvious to you as an author, the cohesion of the paragraph will be much stronger when you include a commentary or reaction to the source before moving into your next supporting thought.

Take a look at the the example quote in a complete context.

Example: Quote in context

In recent years, "dozens of giant landslides, some with debris extending more than 200 km from their source, have been recognized along the Hawaiian ridge and around other oceanic volcanoes" (Garcia, 2015, p. 13). This situation provides excellent opportunities to study the cause of these landslides because they are so frequent.

Notice that the author does not simply summarize the quote or give an overly general "this is important" response. This quote is contextualized by showing that this fact focused on time and place fits into a larger discussion about causes. Even without seeing the topic sentence, this quote in context signals that the main idea of the paragraph (topic sentence) has to do with learning more about the causes of landslides.

At the beginning of this chapter about descriptive writing, you learned that academic descriptive writing is typically situated within a larger purpose. The use of descriptive supporting ideas and details is to add strength and interest to the thesis. This contextualized quote is an excellent example of how this can be done.

Tips for quotations

- Do NOT change any of the words or punctuation
 - If a change is necessary for the integration of the quote into the grammar of your sentence, you can use brackets [*word*] around the word you need to change
- Quotes should not be more than 40 words*
- Quotes should start and end with quotation marks " *word* "
- You should include a citation. See the citation section of this textbook for details on how to do this.
- The final punctuation (usually a period) should come after the final parenthesis in the citation
- If you quote only a part of a sentence, you should use ellipses (...) to show where there is information missing.
- Because the quote will be part of your sentence, you will not capitalize the first word of the quotation, even if capitalized in the original source.
- Quotes should come from multiple sources. Relying too heavily on one source can weaken your position.
- Quotes are just one form of including sources. An essay (or paragraph) should include a variety of integrated sources.

*It is possible to include longer direct quotations, but that is not covered in this textbook.

Exercises

Exercise 1: Choosing quotes

The following quotes come from an article about James Cook, a famous British sailor in the 1700s. Read the example topic sentences below and choose short quotes from these paragraphs that could be used to support each topic sentence.

1. James Cook is recognized for his remarkable work to prevent scurvy.
2. James Cook's voyages resulted in new geographical knowledge for England.
3. One of the noteworthy attributes of James Cook was his leadership at sea.

Source:

"After the Endeavour was grounded on the nearby Queensland coast and repaired, Cook sailed it back to England. He stopped briefly at Batavia (modern Jakarta) for supplies, and, although the crew had been remarkably healthy until then, 30 died of fever and dysentery contracted while on land. None of the crew, however, died of scurvy (a dietary disease, caused by a lack of ascorbic acid, that notoriously decimated the crews of ships on lengthy voyages in the 18th century). This was because, in addition to ensuring cleanliness and ventilation in the crew's quarters, Cook insisted on an appropriate diet that included cress, sauerkraut, and a kind of orange extract. The health in which he maintained his sailors in consequence made his name a naval byword" (Villiers, 2018, "Voyages and Discoveries," para. 2).

"... he successfully completed the first west–east circumnavigation in high latitudes, charted Tonga and Easter Island during the winters, and discovered New Caledonia in the Pacific and the South Sandwich Islands and South Georgia island in the Atlantic. He showed that a real Terra Australis existed only in the landmasses of Australia, New Zealand, and whatever land might remain frozen beyond the ice rim of Antarctica.

And, once again, not one of his crew died of scurvy. Back in England, he was promoted to captain at last, elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and awarded one of its highest honours, the gold Copley Medal, for a paper that he prepared on his work against scurvy" (Villiers, 2018, "Voyages and Discoveries," para. 4).

Exercise 2: Introducing Quotes

Choose one of the individuals below. After skimming the article, practice choosing and introducing a quote in each of the following ways:

1. Time
2. Place
3. Precision
4. Author

[Sonia Sotomayor](#)

[Jorge Luis Borges](#)

[Marjane Satrapi](#)

[John James Audubon](#)

[Lupita Nyong'o](#)

[Hayao Miyazaki](#)

Exercise 3: Create commentary

The following quotes come from research about William Wilberforce. Add commentary for each of the quotes to connect them to the topic sentence. These quote commentaries should be independent of each other. You are not writing a paragraph.

TS: William Wilberforce worked during his political career to end slavery in Britain.

1. "Wilberforce agreed to lead a parliamentary campaign to abolish the slave trade" (Andiruth, 2015, para. 6).
2. "In 1791, he introduced the first Bill to abolish the slave trade which was defeated..." (Andiruth, 2015, para. 7).
3. "...Wilberforce began a parliamentary campaign during which he introduced a motion in favour of abolition almost every year" (Andiruth, 2015, para. 7)
4. "The Slave Trade Act which abolished the slave trade in the British Empire was passed on 25 March 1807" (Andiruth, 2015, para. 7).

Exercise 4: Integrating sources

Imagine you are drafting a paragraph in an essay about the Black Death. Your paragraph lacks development, so you do additional research to add to the paragraph.

Read the quotes below and determine if there is any information that would support the topic sentence below. What information should probably not be used to support this topic sentence?

Topic sentence: The Black Plague was one of history's most deadly epidemics.

1. "The 14th century epidemic of the "Black Death," also called the black plague or bubonic plague, across Europe and Asia, has become one of the most infamous events in history. The plague killed 30-60 percent of the entire population of Europe, claiming a grand total of anywhere between 75 to 200 million lives. Population growth did not resume until a full century later, and the world population did not recover until the 17th century" (Galbreath, 2016, "The Black Death," para. 1).
2. "The massive death toll caused an extreme labor shortage, which meant higher wages for the peasants and a greater choice of who they wanted to work for. The land was plentiful, and lords were forced to try and make conditions more attractive to the peasants. Serfdom all but disappeared as a result, and this "golden age" of prosperity would not be soon forgotten. Decades later, when the feudal lords tried to roll back these benefits and return to the old ways, the result was widespread peasant revolts. The Black Death also helped break the absolute authority of the Catholic Church" (Galbreath, 2016, "The Black Death," para. 2).
3. "Between 1918 and 1920 a disturbingly deadly outbreak of influenza tore across the globe, infecting over a third of the world's population and ending the lives of 20 – 50 million people. Of the 500 million people infected in the 1918 pandemic, the mortality rate was estimated at 10% to 20%, with up to 25 million deaths in the first 25 weeks alone. What separated the 1918 flu pandemic from other influenza outbreaks was the victims; where influenza had always previously only killed juveniles and the elderly or already weakened patients, it had begun striking down hardy and completely healthy young adults, while leaving children and those with weaker immune systems still alive" ("Masters in Public Health," n.d., "Flu Pandemic (1918)", para. 1).



This content is provided to you freely by BYU Open Textbook Network.

Access it online or download it at https://open.byu.edu/up_writing_winter/sources_quoting_new.