USING THE WORDS OF OTHERS TO PROVE YOUR POINT

Quoting Effectively

AP Language & Composition

Writers use quotations for a variety of purposes:

- to argue with another author's definition of a term
- to provide statistical evidence or testimony to validate a claim
- to present the reader with a statement the writer will refute or discuss in detail

- If writers overdo and include too many quotations in a researched essay, readers will form the negative impression that the authors of those sources are more authoritative than the writer of the research paper. It is possible for the voices of those authorities to drown out the writer's voice, in a sense taking over authorship of the paper.
- OWN YOUR PAPER!

When are quotations effective?

- Writers should use direct quotations only when the source's words are particularly relevant or powerful, or they represent an apt example of that specific author's thinking.

- A good policy is to use short quotes (no more than 25 words) and otherwise summarize or paraphrase sources whenever possible. When summarizing, however, be sure to represent the author accurately and fairly. If you must use a longer quotation (longer than 40 words in APA style or longer than four lines in MLA), follow the rules for formatting a blocked quote.

When are quotations ineffective?

- The Salting Syndrome: If a reader can remove the quotes that have been "sprinkled" through the paper and still understand the essay, then the quotes are not an integral part of the essay and do not further the argument.

- The Weak Weave: If the reader sees only glimpses of a writer's voice as it introduces long quotations from others, he/she will assume the writer has lost control over the text and could become frustrated over not reading any original commentary.

When are quotations ineffective?

- The Overpowering Opinion: If each paragraph begins with a quotation, the writer's voice will be lost as the powerful opinion of an "expert" occupies the slot in which readers often expect to find a focus statement that organizes the information to be presented in that paragraph.

- The Dreary Design: If each quotation is introduced using the same sentence structure and the same verb to indicate the author's opinion, readers will quickly become bored with the presentation and tune out the writer's message.

When are quotations ineffective?

- Avoid beginning a paragraph with a quotation. This is because paragraphs usually begin with topic sentences, and beginning a paragraph with a quotation may limits what the writer should talk about in the paragraph to only the quoted words. However, it's sometimes effective to begin an introduction with a thought-provoking quotation.

- Avoid ending a paragraph with a quotation. This is because quotations, especially when they are used as supporting evidence, often require some explanation from the writer. Ending a paragraph with a quotation does not allow for this explanation. In addition, a quotation at the end of a paragraph often does not serve as an effective transitional sentence into the next paragraph.

Introducing quotes

- When you include quotations, make sure that they are integrated smoothly into the argument, flow, and syntax of the paper without any mechanical or grammatical jolts.

- All borrowed ideas or words should be accompanied by a signal phrase that names the author or otherwise alerts the reader that the information is from a source.

- Avoid dropping quotes into your paper in isolation. This is confusing to the reader and immediately identifies you as a weak writer.

Dropped quotes (or helium balloons)

- *Although the bald eagle is still listed as an endangered species, its ever-increasing population is very encouraging. "The bald eagle seems to have stabilized its population, at the very least, almost everywhere" (Sheppard 96).*

- *Although "the bald eagle seems to have stabilized its population," it is still listed as an endangered species (Sheppard 96).*

The best signal phrases connect the quote to the point you are trying to make:

- George Smith, another supporter of cloning and the President of the Human Cloning Foundation, believes that science fiction works have created hysteria in the popular media. Smith argues, "From Frankenstein to The Sixth Day, our popular media has done nothing but stir up the public's anxiety about monsters" (25). His views on the popular media tell us . . .

- A view that contradicts Smith's is articulated by John Brown, who contends that "God never intended for man to participate in his acts of creation. He will never condone our interference in his plan for us" (235). Brown makes it clear that . . .

Sentences containing quotes should be varied in structure for greater readability

- In the words of researcher Herbert Terrace, ". . ." (page).

- As Flora Davis has noted, ". . ." ( ).

- The Gardners, Washoe's trainers, point out that " . . ." ( ).

- " . . . ," claims Noam Chomsky ( ).

- Terrance answers these objections with the following analysis: " . . ." ( ).

Introducing Quotes with Interesting Verbs

- Verbs can be used to introduce summaries, paraphrases, and quotations that indicate the author's point of view on the topic, thus adding to the writer's rhetorical power.

- In the sentence "Smith _____ that the flood might have been disastrous," filling in the blank with *observes, finds,* or *insists* would create different meanings.

- (Journalists should not use verbs that signify rhetorical power in their reporting. They are supposed to be reporting objectively, not subjectively.)

Verbiage

implies suggests argues claims
is uneasy disagrees agrees comments
analyzes contends disparages admits describes
asks defends belittles agrees explains assesses
disagrees bemoans concedes illustrates concludes
holds complains concurs notes finds insists condemns
grants observes predicts maintains deplores points out
proposes deprecates records reveals derides relates
shows laments reports speculates warns says suggests
sees supposes thinks writes

Punctuation reminder

- Notice that there are only two punctuation marks that are used to introduce quotations: the comma and the colon **(:)**.

- Note that a semicolon **(;)** is <u>not</u> used to introduce quotations.

Your go-to guide:

- [The Purdue Owl](#)

Works Cited

- "English Composition 1." *ENG 1001: Integrating Quotations into Sentences*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Mar. 2014.

- "Quotes Submitted on the Back of Other Tips." *McLoughlin/Top Tips* (2013): 249. Web