

How to Integrate Quotations

As you explain or argue your points in writing, you will frequently quote the spoken or written words of others as a means of presenting evidence. One of the most important features of academic writing is the use of the words and ideas from other sources to support your own points. The quotation is especially useful to argument. By using solid evidence, you are proving that you know your subject well and are not presenting superficial ideas. Three ways to include words and ideas from sources include:

Using a Direct Quotation

Jeremy Rifkin says, “Studies on pigs’ social behavior funded by McDonald’s at Purdue University, for example, have found that they crave affection and are easily depressed if isolated or denied playtime with each other” (15).

Notice that the writer starts with the author’s name and “says” as an introduction to the quotation. The quotation is followed by the page number in parentheses (called a parenthetical reference). This page number signals to the reader where he/she can find the quotation in the article being cited. In this case, the writer is using only one source and cites the author’s name in the introduction to the quotation, so he/she only needs to include the page number in the parentheses. Had the writer not used the author’s name or had the writer used multiple sources for his/her essay, he/she would have included the first word of the citation from his/her “Works Cited” page and the page number in the parentheses; for example, (Rifkin 15). Here’s the same example above without the author’s name and an expanded parenthetical reference:

It has been found, in “studies on pigs’ social behavior funded by McDonald’s at Purdue University...that [pigs] crave affection and are easily depressed if isolated or denied playtime with each other” (Rifkin 15).

Notice that the author’s name appears at the end in the parenthetical reference. Also notice that this direct quotation is blended with the writer’s own sentence. The ellipsis (...) shows that there are portions of the original quotation left out. The brackets [pigs] indicate where the writer inserted his/her own word that was not part of the original quotation by Rifkin. Using these methods, the writer has more flexibility with how he/she integrates direct quotations into his/her writing.

Paraphrasing a Quotation

In *A Change of Heart about Animals*, Jeremy Rifkin notes that McDonald’s has funded studies on pigs that show that they need affection and playtime with one another (15).

Notice that the writer starts with the article name and author but then puts the information from the article into his/her own words, using some of the author’s original words, but placing them in his/her own structure (McDonald’s, affection, playtime). The writer does not directly quote the article, so there is no need for quotation marks. The writer still cites his/her source by including a parenthetical reference to signal the reader where this point originates.

Summarizing a Quotation

In *A Change of Heart about Animals*, Jeremy Rifkin cites study after study to show that animals and humans are more alike than we think. He shows that animals feel emotions, reason, make and use tools, learn and use language, and mourn their dead. One study even shows that pigs need affection and playtime with one another, and enjoy playing with toys (15).

Notice that the writer starts with the article name and author but then summarizes the main points of the author in his/her own words. This summary includes more information than the paraphrase as the writer summarizes some of the background information to better understand the point about pigs needing affection and playtime. The writer still cites his/her source by including a parenthetical reference to signal the reader where this point originates.

Cite Sources of Quotations

All quotations, paraphrases, and summaries of someone else's words need documentation in the text to show the original source. Typical MLA style is to use parenthetical references within the text (as shown above) and to include a "Works Cited" page at the end of the essay. The information on this handout provides basic information about how to use parenthetical references, but you should use a handbook with MLA guidelines for details on how to create a "Works Cited" page and how to quote specific material (poetry or plays and long quotations, for example).

Tips for Using Quotations

Make Quotations Natural

Blend quotations smoothly into your own writing. Do not simply drop a quotation into your paper and hope it fits. An irrelevant quotation is worse than no quotation at all. That means you need to "surround" your quotation with your own words to give it a "home." Try to make the quotation fit in as if you had written it yourself as part of your paper. In the best writing, quotations are integrated so well that they sound as if they are not quotations at all.

Support Quotations

Introduce the quotation in your own words, state the quotation, explain what the quotation means or implies, and then explain how it supports the idea being proven in that paragraph (which means you are connecting it back to your thesis as well). Be sure to include a correct citation of the source, as suggested above.

Notice that the writer introduces the quotation by giving context or background: Borich (the author being quoted) uses research from other people to support his point. The essay writer includes reference to the original research and to the author she is quoting as she introduces the quotation. She smoothly blends the direct quotation into the passage, offering a parenthetical page citation, and clarifies what the quotation means. Finally, the writer links the quotation to her thesis and explains how it supports that idea.

Example of direct quotation in the beginning of a paragraph (from an essay about effective teaching strategies):

Regarding research by Evertson and Emmer, Borich states, "Effective teachers attached assignments directly to the end of an in-class activity, avoiding awkward pauses or even the need for a transition. The assignment appeared to students as a logical extension of what was already taking place" (128). The timing of assignments, then, contributes to their effectiveness; if assignments are linked together naturally, then students are more likely to see the relevance. In my observation of this teacher, the homework assignments do immediately follow the lessons to which they pertain. They mimic the types of activities and discussions (as noted on agenda) that students were engaged in less than 20 minutes prior. The students are actively engaged in preparing for their homework and they seem to understand its purpose.

Same example with parts labeled:

INTRODUCE DIRECT QUOTATION: Regarding research by Evertson and Emmer, Borich states, **STATE DIRECT QUOTATION:** “Effective teachers attached assignments directly to the end of an in-class activity, avoiding awkward pauses or even the need for a transition. The assignment appeared to students as a logical extension of what was already taking place” (128). **EXPLAIN WHAT THE QUOTATION MEANS:** The timing of assignments, then, contributes to their effectiveness; if assignments are linked together naturally, then students are more likely to see the relevance. **SHOW HOW IT SUPPORTS THE MAIN POINT (THESIS):** In my observation of this teacher, the homework assignments do immediately follow the lessons to which they pertain. They mimic the types of activities and discussions (as noted on agenda) that students were engaged in less than 20 minutes prior.

Example of direct quotation in the middle of a paragraph (from an essay about effective teaching strategies):

In previous observations, I have heard many students refer to homework assignments as “stupid.” If a student does not see the value in doing an assignment, he or she is less likely to follow through with the work. A student may put little effort into “stupid” assignments. As Borich states, “Explanations [of homework assignments] are important if anything other than a mechanical or begrudging response is expected” (128). He suggests that it is incumbent upon the teacher to insure student engagement by making sure the explanation of homework is clear and relevant. In this situation, when a student comments on what seems to him a large amount of homework, the teacher is quick to point out the relevance of the assignments. She shows the class how the homework is an extension of what they have been learning in class. Continuing to send the message that the most important point of the homework is student learning, the teacher also invites the students to offer suggestions for adapting the homework to be more effective. No one takes her up on her offer.

In addition to accomplishing the above requirements, notice that the writer offers a more expanded introduction to the quote by referring to personal experience and offering commentary on that experience before introducing the quotation from Borich. Notice that the writer inserts some of her own words into the quotation by using brackets [].

Same example with parts labeled:

INTRODUCE DIRECT QUOTATION: In previous observations, I have heard many students refer to homework assignments as “stupid.” If a student does not see the value in doing an assignment, he or she is less likely to follow through with the work. A student may put little effort into “stupid” assignments. **STATE DIRECT QUOTATION:** As Borich states, “Explanations [of homework assignments] are important if anything other than a mechanical or begrudging response is expected” (128). **EXPLAIN WHAT THE QUOTATION MEANS:** He suggests that it is incumbent upon the teacher to insure student engagement by making sure the explanation of homework is clear and relevant. **SHOW HOW IT SUPPORTS THE MAIN POINT (THESIS):** In this situation, when a student comments on what seems to him a large amount of homework, the teacher is quick to point out the relevance of the assignments. She shows the class how the homework is an extension of what they have been learning in class. Continuing to send the message that the most important point of the homework is student learning, the teacher also invites the students to offer suggestions for adapting the homework to be more effective. No one takes her up on her offer.