

Quotations

By necessity, by proclivity, and by delight, we all quote.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Quotation and Originality*

Quoting vs. paraphrasing

When you quote, you replicate exactly the words of another text. You indicate this replication by placing the words between quotation marks or offsetting them as a block quotation. When you paraphrase, you restate ideas of the original text in your own words. In both cases, give credit where due by citing your source(s).

Reasons to quote

There are several reasons to quote material from other sources:

- To bolster your claims by citing an authority on the topic:

Academic writing is a dialog—a conversation with your professor, peers, readers, and other thinkers who preceded you and whose published and unpublished works you draw on as you develop your own ideas. Rhetorician and philosopher Kenneth Burke describes this process in terms of entering a parlor and listening in on a discussion that has been going on since long before you arrived: “You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar” (Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 110-11).

- To offer evidence in support of your claims:

Winsor’s whimsy extends to the temporal as well. Thus we meet “Probable-Possible,” a black hen incapable of comprehending “the Positive Now”; and Humpty Dumpty, who finds salvation through a well-timed royal intervention: “The King set the time machine back to two, / Now Humpty’s unscrambled and good as new” (*The Space Child’s Mother Goose*, n.p.).

- To share a particularly captivating wording, formulation, or idea with your readers:

Gulick’s juxtaposition of glowing colors and inviting textures creates what Frances Croutade terms an “onomatopoetic aura” (13).

- To create variety within your text. Remember, though, that *yours* is usually the most important voice in your writing. Use quotations to enhance what *you* have to say, rather than letting them speak for you.

Introducing and interpreting quotations

- As odd as it may sound, quotations don't speak for themselves. They require context, introduction, and interpretation. Explain their significance.
- Avoid simply plunking quotations into the middle of a paragraph to take the place of your own sentences. Recall the idea of the Burkean parlor and consider that it is impolite not to introduce the other "conversationalists" to your readers.

POOR: Quoting effectively is not without challenges. "In fact, it is as difficult to appropriate the thoughts of others as it is to invent" (Emerson, *Quotation and Originality*, 42).

BETTER: Quoting effectively is not without challenges. As poet and transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson observes, "In fact, it is as difficult to appropriate the thoughts of others as it is to invent" (*Quotation and Originality*, 42).

- Express yourself in your own words. Quotations can spice up your writing, but avoid overusing them or inelegantly stringing them together with patches of your own writing. As the Kansas University Writing Center puts it, "Incorporate [quotations] into the writing instead of inserting writing into the quotations" ("Incorporating References," retrieved 21 October 2009 from <http://www.writing.ku.edu/~writing/guides/references.shtml>).
- Quote only as much text as you need to make your point. There's no reason to pad your paper with unnecessary text; moreover, some readers have a habit of skipping over long quotations. (Be honest now. Did *you* read *all* of the first example above?)

Citing sources

Among the most fundamental ethical principles of academic discourse are giving credit where credit is due and being open about resources consulted so that others may retrace our steps. To realize both principles, **always cite direct quotations and paraphrases**. When paraphrasing, be meticulous about putting ideas into your own words. Ideas obtained from other sources (published or unpublished, printed or online, oral or written) must be cited unless the material is common knowledge. Failure to credit sources constitutes plagiarism and goes beyond being bad form: it can be grounds for dismissal from the university or from a job.

Not sure what to cite? Consult the Writing Studio's workshop [Working with Sources: Avoiding Plagiarism](#) or Duke University Library's webpages on plagiarism, <http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/plagiarism.htm>.

Mechanics of quotations

Below are a few basics on the mechanics of quotation. For nittier grittier detail, consult a reliable style guide such as *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

- Quote accurately. Signal editorial changes to the original text with [square brackets], omission of words with...ellipses..., and emphasis with *italics* and a parenthetical note:

“He took his vorpal sword in hand: / Long time the manxome [Jabberwock] he sought”
(Carroll, lines 9-10).

“And, as in uffish thought he stood, / The Jabberwock... / Came whiffing through the tulgey wood...” (13-15).

“One, two! One, two! And through and through / The vorpal blade went *snicker-snack*”
(17-18, emphasis added).

- When a quotation is logically followed by a period or comma, that punctuation goes before the closing quotation mark, even if the punctuation is not part of the original text; in contrast, semi-colons and colons go to the right of the closing quotation mark:

The narrator’s warning, “Beware the Jabberwock, my son,” goes unheeded, for the lad immediately commences hunting the beast.

Carroll indicates the hunter stands “in uffish thought”; yet as Birdwell notes, the boy has little reason at this point to be petulant (“huffish”).

- If quotations are followed immediately by parenthetical citations, shift commas and periods to the right of the citation, even if the punctuation was part of the original text:

Given Carroll’s etymology of “mimsy” as deriving from “flimsy and miserable” (*Through the Looking Glass*, 127), Birdwell’s contention that a borogove is a Boron-filled barn makes little sense.

- Put question marks within closing quotation marks if they are part of the original text; put them outside of the closing quotation marks if they are part of *your* text:

The adult rhetorically asks, “And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?”

Where else but England could toves so interminably “gyre and gimble in the wabe”?

- Use single quotation marks to indicate quotes within quotes:

In the penultimate stanza, the adult authority revels in the child’s victory: “‘O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!’ / He chortled in his joy” (23-24).

- Quotations that require four or more lines of text should be set off as block quotations. The quoted text is not enclosed within quotation marks. Block quotations retain the exact punctuation of the original text; parenthetical citations follow to the right of concluding punctuation.

Birdwell questions the accuracy of Pendleton’s theory. As he explains,

There is no evidence, in fact, that the Jabberwock and the Snark ever met. Late-18th-century zoologist Alice Liddell was the first to observe the severe allergic reactions Whiffing Burlblers suffer when they encounter Booji; their fits include sneezing, uncontrolled hiccups of flaming breath, heavy perspiring, and in extreme cases, fainting. As there is no doubt the Snark was a Boojum, any meeting between the Jabberwock and the Snark would have permanently incapacitated the former.
(Birdwell, 682)