

Quotations: A Guide for Self-Editing

When and How Should I Use Quotations?

- Quotations are a vital element of every paper; however there are many pitfalls and errors that students come across involving quotations.
- Quotations must be identical to the original- using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and MUST be attributed to the original author.
- Quotations should be used to provide evidence to support your thesis.
- Quotations should always be analyzed and explained in your paper. This does not mean simply paraphrasing the quotations' contents. Why are you using this quote and why is it relevant to your thesis?
- Quotations should never be used as a thesis or at the beginning of a paragraph.
- Keep quotations to a minimum. A short phrase or sentence is more easily understood than a long quotation. Your ideas are more important than any other person's.
- Quotations can be manipulated to fit into your text. For instance:
"Cyclops, if anyone, any mortal man, Asks you how you got your eye put out, Tell him that Odysseus that marauder did it" (Homer 9.500-9.502).

This quote could be revised to:

Odysseus yelled to the Cyclops, "if anyone...Asks you how you got your eye put out, Tell him that [I]...did it" (Homer 9.500-9.502).

How to Format a Quotation

Quotations should never stand alone in its own sentence (floating quote). Instead, use a tag to introduce a quotation, or integrate it into a sentence:

Odysseus and his men "helped [themselves] to some of the cheese" (Homer 9.207).

- Notice how this quotation is worked seamlessly into the sentence.
- This student used brackets, [], to change the words of the original quote so that it fit better into the sentence.
- There is no comma at the end of the quote before the quotation mark.
- The citation comes after the quotation mark, including the author and page number, or book and line number, followed by a period.

Odysseus first greets Arête, saying, "To your husband and to your knees I come...May the gods grant prosperity to them" (Homer 7.156-158).

- There is a comma between the tag ("saying") and the quote.
- The student uses an ellipse (...) to cut out certain parts of the quote that were not needed.

Block Quotations

First, make sure you really need a long quotation. Block quotations are quotations that take up four or more lines of regular text. Block quotations should be used very sparingly. Citing long

text to lengthen your paper is always obvious. Instead of lifting a large piece of text, try to choose the most important lines and explicate those separately. If block quotations are needed, then format them properly:

- Introduce the quote with a tag and then a colon; do not use quotation marks.
- Indent the left margin of the entire quote, and continue the paragraph without an indented line. The quote should run flush with the right margin.
- Here the punctuation is placed at the end of the sentence, and not after the citation.

Then Odysseus yelled to the Cyclops:

*Cyclops, if anyone, any mortal man, Asks you how you got your eye put out,
Tell him that Odysseus the marauder did it, Son of Laertes, whose home is
on Ithaca. (Homer 9.500-503)*

The entire point of Odysseus telling the Cyclops his name...

Citations:

- Are all of your quotations cited?
- Are all of your quotations explained (Why do we need to see these words?)
- Have you edited all floating quotations?
- Are all your quotations punctuated correctly?
- Do you cite all ideas that are paraphrased (except facts that are 'common knowledge,' which could be found easily on an internet search)?
- Are all citations included in a Works Cited page?
- Whenever possible, do you include the author's name in the sentence or tag so that only the page numbers need to appear in the citation?
- If there is no known author for a source, do you use an abbreviated version of the title?
- If there are two sources by the same author, do you include the author as well as an abbreviated title in the parenthetical citation?
- Is all punctuation included inside of the quotation marks?