QUOTING PASSAGES IN YOUR PAPERS

When building discussion in formal papers, you will often want to incorporate passages of text to make your claims more graphic and more effective. This is essential in expository papers.

Guidelines When Quoting:

1. Only insert a passage if it is QUOTEWORTHY. Insert text if the author’s wording is powerful and necessary to enhance the quality of your essay’s argument.

2. When inserting a passage, provide the reader with necessary CONTEXT information, such as the speaker, the time and place, the emotion, the subject matter, etc.

3. **Never insert a passage as a separate sentence all by itself!** The passage you insert should always be EMBEDDED into your own sentence(s) according to proper grammar and punctuation rules.

4. After you quote, follow it with CRITICAL ANALYSIS. Explain the significance of the passage by discussing how and why the subject matter of the quotation is a highly effective illustration of what you are discussing. Your explanation should show a deep/insightful understanding of the text; it should enlighten your readers.

5. You must follow all quotation RULES precisely. This requires extreme attention to DETAIL!

THREE METHODS FOR EMBEDDING PASSAGES

**Method #1:** Insert the quoted passage by using an action verb and a comma. Notice that the action verb and comma may come before or after the quote.

Examples of action verbs: says, exclaims, ponders, decides, comments, narrates, wonders, suggests

Gene finally comes to an understanding of the conflict within himself. He defines his treachery to Finny by saying, “It was just some ignorance inside me, some crazy thing inside me, something blind . . .” (201; ch. 7). Gene’s honesty and candid self-analysis are his most admirable traits, and they ultimately enable him to achieve his “separate peace.”

“Students who actively annotate their novels by writing in margins and underlining key passages have proven to be 72% more effective in essay writing on the college level,” indicates a 2001 Princeton University study (Marcus 23). Clearly, there is a dramatic advantage for those who study their novels on a more intimate level.

Ashamed that Huck has played such a cruel prank, Jim exclaims, “Dat truck dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren’s en makes ’em ashamed” (86; ch. 18). When Jim labels Huck as “trash,” he places Huck at the lowest level of human beings—the kind that would prey on another’s sensitivity.

**Method #2:** Introduce the quoted passage with an explanatory sentence and a colon. The statement before the colon should be a complete sentence describing the subject matter of the quotation. In effect, the colon means “the following is an example of what I have just stated.”

The remark of one Californian reveals the prejudice that the migrants would encounter: “Them goddamn Okies got no sense and no feelings. They ain’t human” (297; ch. 6). Such ignorance and insensitivity forced the migrants to endure even more deplorable conditions than those they had fled from in the Midwest.

Brenda Nelson of Barrington, Illinois, believes that there is great danger in rewarding student grades with external rewards: “External rewards undermine students’ natural eagerness to learn. When we offer kids money and prizes, we cheapen the value of learning” (Jacobson 39). She also explains the purpose of promoting internal motivation: “Our ultimate goal is to create citizens who make decisions for the right reasons--not because someone is dangling a prize in front of them” (Jacobson 39). Nelson’s ideas suggest that external rewards will only motivate students temporarily, for true success is measured once learning is valued for its own sake.

Crooks expresses his opinion about the futility of dreams: “Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It’s
just in their head. They’re all the time talkin’ about it, but it’s jus’ in their head” (74; ch. 4). Clearly, Crooks believes that most men just talk about their dreams rather than do anything to actually achieve these visions.

**Method #3:** Work the quoted passage into the natural flow (syntax) of your sentence. Your sentence must be punctuated correctly.

Cheryl Wickerson exerts that “[t]he only money and prizes students should be given for good grades are . . . the prizes of self-esteem, pride, and commitment to attaining the highest level of their educational and intellectual development” (39). Thus, it seems that parents should reconsider rewarding their child’s grades with money.

Afraid that Romeo is merely infatuated with Juliet, Friar Laurence warns Romeo to proceed “[w]isely and slow. They stumble that run fast” (60, II.3). Indeed, the deaths of these star-crossed lovers could have been prevented if only the young lovers had heeded the friar’s advice to approach love with slow caution.

Jacksonville Middle School in Texas has recently decided not to issue lockers to its students. But most students want to have an assigned locker since, “[f]or most students, a school locker is more than just a place to stow their books. It’s a haven of self-expression” (Smith 12). When schools do not issue lockers, teenagers often feel their autonomy is sacrificed.

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**SPECIAL QUOTATION RULES**

It is important to copy a passage exactly as it appears in the original text. However, in order to get the passage to fit correctly into your own sentences, it may sometimes be necessary to alter the text slightly. To do this, you must follow the acceptable procedures and rules listed below.

1. **Omitting words from the original text:** Use an *ellipsis* ( . . . ) to indicate where any words have been omitted from the original text. When typing, put a space between each dot in the ellipsis.

   *original text:* “Even alone I can’t say I never loved Tom,” she admitted in a pitiful voice. “It wouldn’t be true.”
   *with ellipsis:* Daisy pitifully admits to Gatsby, “Even alone I can’t say I never loved Tom . . . It wouldn’t be true” (140).

   *original text:* If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream.
   *with ellipsis:* As Gatsby helplessly awaited a phone call from Daisy, “… he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream” (169).

   *original text:* Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’s gardens, don’t nest in corncribs, they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.
   *with ellipsis:* Miss Maudie explains, “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. . . . [T]hey don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird” (90).

2. **Changing a name or pronoun in the original text:** To clarify which character the passage is referring to, you may need to change a pronoun into a proper noun. Use [ ] around the altered words to alert your reader that you have altered the original text. The most common reason that brackets are used is to clarify a pronoun that exists in the original text.

   Nick Carroway is described as a man of unusual insight and a person whom many like to confide in. When Fitzgerald writes, “… [Nick] was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought . . .” (5), the author has established a narrator whom Gatsby himself will eventually confide in.

   Tom exclaims to Nick, “[Gatsby] threw dust into your eyes just like he did into Daisy’s . . . He ran over Myrtle like you’d run over a dog and never even stopped his car” (187).

3. **Altering capitalization in the text:** To enable a passage to fit correctly into your own sentence, you may sometimes need to change the grammar or capitalization of the text. Use brackets [ ] to indicate the change.

   In the example below from *Romeo and Juliet*, the [ ]’s are used to indicate that the “w” was capitalized in the original text, but to fit correctly into the sentence below, it had to be changed to a lower case letter.
Afraid that Romeo is merely infatuated with Juliet, Friar Laurence warns Romeo to proceed “[w]isely and slow. They stumble that run fast” (II.3, 60).

5. **Quoting a passage that has both conversation and narration:** When you are quoting a passage that contains both conversation and narration, you must use *double quotes* as shown below. Put a space between the double and single quotation marks.

Moshe escaped his execution and returned home to warn his townspeople of their imminent danger. However, his tale of horror was rejected by the disbelieving townspeople: “People refused not only to believe [Moshe’s] stories, but even to listen to them. ‘He’s just trying to make us pity him. What an imagination he has!’ they said. Or even, ‘Poor fellow. He’s gone mad’” (4-5).

6. **Quoting POETRY:** When quoting three lines or less of poetry, include a slash with a space on each side (/ ) to indicate where the line breaks occur in the text. Punctuate and capitalize the text exactly as it is printed on the page, and place line numbers (not page numbers) in parenthesis after the quotation. Look at the example from Frost’s poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”:

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Frost’s narrator decides to leave the woods and return to his home, despite its responsibilities: “The woods are lovely, dark, and deep, / But I have promises to keep, / And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep” (17-20).
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7. **Quoting LONG passages:** Long passages are those which are *more than four lines long* when typed. Set up the passage with a complete sentence and colon (method #2). Do not use quotation marks unless the original has them (dialogue, for instance). Indent each line ten spaces from the left margin; leave the right margin and the double spacing the same. Cite the source in parenthesis after a closing period. Follow your quotation with analysis and discussion. See this example:

Huck’s greatest struggle in the novel occurs when he must decide once and for all whether or not to contact Miss Watson regarding Jim’s whereabouts. Huck’s sense of legal duty clashes with his sense of personal loyalty:

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I knowed very well why [the words] wouldn’t come. It was because my heart warn’t right; it was because I warn’t square; it was because I was playing double. I was letting on to give up sin, but away inside of me I was holding on to the biggest one of all. I was trying to make my mouth say I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go a write that nigger’s owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie—and He knowed it. You can’t pray a lie—I found that out. (214)
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Here Huck surrenders his soul to everlasting damnation because he cannot bear to turn in a good man. Huck’s memories of Jim—crying for his distant family, shouldering many of Huck’s tasks, rejoicing at Huck’s returns—overwhelm Huck’s sense of duty to his society. Clearly, what Huck perceives as the correct and righteous thing to do is contrary to what his inner heart is urging him to do.

**Additional note:** Setting off a long quotation like this is the only case in which the citation in ( ) goes after the period. In a paper of only 2-4 pages in length, it is rarely necessary to quote such a lengthy passage.