

Using Quotations

Related guides: 'Using Paraphrase' and 'Referencing your work'.

What is quotation?

Quotation (or direct quotation), is the inclusion of someone else's words, in their exact original form, in your assignment. You may want to include a phrase, sentence, or longer extract from a text you have been reading, to strengthen your argument. However, if you use other writers' words verbatim, you need to signal to your reader that neither the ideas nor the expression are your own work, but that they are a quotation from another source. To avoid plagiarism, you should both reference the source and clearly present the words as a quotation.

How do I present quotations?

There are two methods to indicate that you are quoting someone else's words, depending on whether the quotation is short or long.

Short quotations of a line or so in length (up to 40-50 words) should be **enclosed with quotation marks** and integrated into your own paragraph. 'Single quotation marks' or "double quotation marks" may be used. Single are more common in UK academic writing whereas double are more commonly found in American writing, but it makes little difference which you use as long as you are consistent. You must also include a **reference** which gives **the page number** on which the quotation may be found.

Longer quotations of several lines should be laid out separately from your paragraph, by leaving a **blank line above and below**. The quotation should be **indented** by 0.5 cm on either side, and **single spaced**. As this indicates that it is a quotation, you do not need to use quotation marks too. Look for examples of this layout in academic books and journals to see how it is used. You should also give a **reference**, including a **page number**.

How do I alter or shorten quotations?

You do not need to include the entire quotation, if it is not relevant or does not fit your sentence. Nor do you need to quote whole sentences, but can incorporate sections into your own sentence (as long as you make it fit grammatically).

Punctuation marks (such as full stops and commas) and references should usually be placed outside the closing quotation marks unless they are a necessary part of the original quotation (such as question marks or exclamation marks):

The character's naivety is evident when she asks her mother 'why was this never mentioned?'⁷. *(NB This example uses a footnote reference).*

If the quotation is the beginning of a sentence in the original, but you use it in the middle of your own sentence, you should change the capital letter to a lower case letter to integrate it.

If the quotation itself contains a quotation, you should alternate between single and double quotation marks to show this:

Myers argues that 'the notion of the "death of the author" is frequently misunderstood' (2002:39).

However, if you alter a quotation otherwise, you should make this clear to the reader, and ensure that your changes do not alter the meaning. If you have left out a section, because it is not relevant to your point, then indicate this with three full stops in square brackets.

Smith summarizes this view: 'the novel is a significant [...] landmark in eighteenth century literature' (Smith, 2003: 47).

You can also use square brackets to indicate where you have had to change a quotation slightly to make it fit in your own sentence.

Smith's view of this text is true of all texts of the period; they provide 'fascinating record[s] of the tastes of a generation' (Smith, 2003: 47).

How can I integrate quotations into my writing?

Each quotation needs to be introduced, so that your reader knows what your purpose is in using it, what you think it means or proves, or what critical opinion you hold towards the views it expresses. A quotation should never stand alone; do not assume that its inclusion and interpretation is self-explanatory for your reader. If you use one, explain its meaning, significance or purpose in your essay, how it supports your argument, or why you agree or disagree with it. For example:

Cottrell's definition of critical thinking as 'a complex process of deliberation' is widely accepted, but is too general to be useful here (Cottrell, 2005:2).

Bowell and Kemp, however, argue that critical thinking skills can be applied not only to 'arguments and whether they succeed in providing us with good reasons for acting or believing', but also 'non-argumentative attempts to persuade' (Bowell and Kemp, 2005:2). This is a much broader and more concrete definition and offers a useful approach for this discussion.

The words you use to introduce the quotation can subtly convey your opinion of it. If you use no particular words, and simply integrate a quotation into your own sentence, this can imply that you wish it to be understood as a statement of fact or generally accepted opinion that represents your own stance, and is not open to question.

However, if you introduce a quotation as the opinion of another scholar, then you imply that you take a stance on it. Your choice of words can convey this.

How can I use quotations productively?

Assignments are an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of an issue and ability to construct a logical, clearly expressed argument, supported by wide and critical reading. Quotations play a role in this, but lecturers are primarily interested in what *you* have to say. If you include a lot of quoted material, you will demonstrate that you can select and arrange material, but your essay may become a collage of other people's work rather than your own. You may miss the chance to gain higher marks by explaining and commenting in your own words, thereby demonstrating your understanding, analysis and writing skills.

Quotations are best used sparingly, and should not stand alone without comment or interpretation from you. Although quotations are one way to provide evidence for your points, you should only use them if the reader needs to see the exact words of the original for your point to be valid. Otherwise, a paraphrase may be a better and more concise demonstration of your understanding. Quotations should not be used simply because they sound good, or to make basic points which you could make yourself, or to avoid expressing an idea in your own words. You could use quotations to:

- offer a definition (perhaps from a specialist dictionary or major scholar);
- use a term or phrase which is characteristic of a particular author;
- provide an opinion with which you want to engage in detail (perhaps to analyse it closely, build on it or disagree with it);
- add authority to your argument (although a paraphrase might also do);
- offer a sample of text as 'data' to be analysed (especially in the Humanities).

Want to know more?

If you have any further questions about this topic you can make an appointment to see a **Learning Enhancement Tutor** in the **Student Support Service**, as well as speaking to your lecturer or adviser.

- 📞 Call: 01603 592761
- 💻 Ask: ask.let@uea.ac.uk
- 🖱️ Click: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/student-support-service/learning-enhancement>

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Your comments or suggestions about our resources are very welcome.

	<p>Scan the QR-code with a smartphone app for more resources.</p>	
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