



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

Institute of American Language and Culture

**Writing Center
Workshop**

The Art of Quoting

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Adopted from “They Say/I Say”
by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

Quoting someone else's words gives your writing credibility and helps ensure that it is fair and accurate.

Quotations function as a kind of proof of evidence, saying to readers: "Look, I'm not just making this up. She makes this claim, and here it is in her exact words."

Just don't assume that quotations speak for themselves. If the meaning of a quotation is obvious to YOU, doesn't mean it is obvious to the readers.

Therefore: evaluate how well this particular quote supports a particular part of your text; surround every major quotation with a “frame” explaining whose words they are, what the quotation means, and how they relate to the text.

Linguists call unframed quotations “dangling quotations” and compare them to “orphans” or to “hit-and-run accidents”.

Example of a “hit-and-run” quotation:

Deborah Tannen writes about academia. Academics believe “that intellectual inquiry is a metaphorical battle. Following from that is a second assumption that the best way to demonstrate intellectual prowess is to criticize, find fault and attack.”

I agree with Tannen. Another point Tannen makes is that...

Since the student fails to introduce the quotation adequately or to explain why he finds it worth quoting, readers will have a hard time reconstructing what Tannen argued.

Templates for introducing quotations

X states, “Not all steroids should be banned from sports.”

As the prominent philosopher X puts it, “..._____.”

According to X, “_____.”

X himself writes, “_____.”

In her book, _____ X maintains that “_____.”

Writing in the journal Commentary, X complains that “_____.”

In X’s view, “_____.”

X agrees when she writes, “_____.”

X disagrees when she writes, “_____.”

X complicates matters further when she writes, “_____.”

Templates for explaining quotations

Basically, X is warning that the proposed solution will only make the problem worse.

In other words, X believes _____.

In making this comment, X urges us to _____.

X is corroborating the age-old adage that _____.

X's point is that _____.

The essence of X's argument is that _____.

In such explanations, we use language that accurately reflects the spirit of the quoted passage. Since in the example above Tannen is clearly alarmed by the culture of “attack” that she describes, it would be more accurate to use language that reflects that alarm: “Tannen is alarmed that,” “Tannen is disturbed by,” “Tannen deplores,” “Tannen complains.”

Passage revised:

Deborah Tannen, a prominent linguistics professor, complains that academia is too combative. Rather than really listening to others, Tannen insists, academics habitually try to prove one another wrong. As Tannen herself puts it, “We are all driven by our ideological assumption that intellectual inquiry is a metaphorical battle,” that “the best way to demonstrate intellectual prowess is to criticize, find fault, and attack.” In short, Tannen objects that academic communication tends to be a competition for supremacy in which loftier values like truth and consensus get lost.

Tannen’s observations ring true to me because I have often felt that the academic pieces I read for class are negative and focus on proving another theorist wrong rather than stating the truth...

Blend the author’s words with your own.

Can you overanalyze the quotation?

Yes, but it is still better than to leave it “dangling”.

Let's add some visuals

Can you think of a quote as of a... sandwich?

✕ The Quote Sandwich



Introduce It!

*Introduce your quote with a **signal phrase** and an **active verb**.*

Ex: Sydow argues that... / Researchers observed...

Quotation

*After you introduce it, add your **quote**.*

Ex: Sydow argues that, “Paper note cards are an inefficient way to create a research log” (188).

Explain It!

*Now that you’ve added your quote, **explain** why the quote is important. What does it mean? How does it connect with your thesis? The explanation should be at least as **long**, or **longer** than the quote itself.)*

3100 × 1814



MAKE YOUR WRITING MORE APPETIZING WITH THE QUOTE SANDWICH



INTRODUCE IT

YOUR TOP PIECE OF BREAD IS YOUR INTRODUCTION. BEFORE ADDING IN YOUR QUOTATION, INTRODUCE IT.

Mark Twain claims,

According to Twain,

On page 32 Twain states,

QUOTE IT

YOUR QUOTATION IS THE FILLING OF YOUR SANDWICH. AFTER YOUR INTRODUCTION, ADD YOUR QUOTATION.

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

EXPLAIN IT

YOUR BOTTOM PIECE OF BREAD IS YOUR EXPLANATION; EXPLAIN WHY YOUR QUOTATION IS IMPORTANT.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?
HOW DOES IT SUPPORT YOUR THESIS?**

FOR EXAMPLE

According to Plato, "Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools because they have to say something." Plato's point is that people should always think before they speak. This is important to remember when communicating in any situation, whether talking to parents or chatting with peers, as speaking without thinking can lead to saying something one does not mean or will regret.

Let's fix this together

According to Lahl Jennifer, “egg donors and surrogate mothers are coerced by the offer of large sums of money and deceived about the risks and harms.” When a surrogate mother is contracting the surrogate agreement, she could neither imagine their connection to the fetuses during pregnancy nor imagine the pain of taking the infant away.

Let's fix this together

Garden gnomes traditionally were used to be distinctions between the working class as they “anxiously [copy] the manners of the upper class” (Londos 299). Garden gnomes became the kitsch of pop culture and a way for the middle class to experience high-class activities and lifestyle.