# A Quick Guide to Using Quotations

## When should I quote?

Use a direct quote instead of a paraphrase if:

- The language is distinct and/or particularly useful to your argument.
- The idea of the quotation is difficult to paraphrase.
- The presence of a quotation from an authority on the subject provides support for your thesis or argument.
- The text is slightly ambiguous and therefore difficult to paraphrase.[1]

## What to remember when using quotations:

**Integrate the quotation into a sentence**

A common mistake:

"The initial impetus for the voyages that would take Europeans around the Cape of Good Hope in one direction and the Americas in the other came from the Portuguese royal house" (Rosenwein, 2004, p.318). [*This whole sentence is a quotation so the reader has to guess how it is connected to the main argument of the paper.*]

How to fix it:

In spite of the fact that the "initial impetus for the voyages that would take Europeans around the Cape of Good Hope in one direction and the Americas in the other came from the Portuguese royal house" (Rosenwein, 2004, p.318), it was to be the Spanish, and Christopher Columbus, who conquered the New World.

**Make sure that the grammar of the quotation and the sentence match**

A common mistake:

Making books is difficult; the "trick was to get the raw materials that were needed to ensure ongoing production" (Rosenwein, 2004, p.318). [*The signal phrase in this sentence is in the present tense, while the quotation is in the past tense. This makes the sentence confusing and hard to read.*]

How to fix it:

Making books was difficult in the Middle Ages; the "trick was to get the raw materials that were needed" (Rosenwein, 2004, p.318). [*The signal phrase is now in the past tense so it matches the quotation.*]

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[1] Adapted from Troyka and Hesse (2006) *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*. 4th Canadian Ed.

## Useful punctuation for integrating quotations smoothly:

a. **Signal phrase**.
Used to identify the author of the quotation, or provide a context.

b**. Ellipses** (…)
Used to eliminate words that you do not need, while still preserving the author's intent.

c. **Square brackets** [ ]
Used to change words in the quotation to better suit the style of the main work while retaining the quotation's original meaning.

d. **Sic**
Used to show that a spelling mistake in the quotation isn't your fault, but rather the original author's.

**Example**
In the late Middle Ages[a], "The enormous demand for books …[b] meant that a market was ready-made for the printing press". Rosenwein argues that[a] although the printing press was "obvious in thought, [it][c] marked a great practical breakthrough: it depended on a new technique to mold [sic][d] metal type".


## Useful expressions for integrating quotations smoothly:

| According to<br>As shown by<br>In spite of the claim by | | Smith (1972) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Smith (1972) | asserts<br>acknowledges<br>explains<br>comments<br>argues<br>concedes<br>suggests | | that… |
| As | Smith (1972) | | observes<br>concludes<br>proposes<br>notes |


## More information:

For more information about citing sources, check out our quick guides to MLA, APA, and CMS, or consult your academic librarian.

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All example quotations are taken from: Rosenwein, Barbara H.  2004. *A Short History of the Middle Ages*. Vol. 2. Peterborough: Broadview, p 318.