

Integrating Quotations

Choose quotations carefully; they should add more to your thoughts, rather than merely repeat. Do not simply sprinkle them in like confetti and assume they are understood. You should lead into the quotation with context (briefly, what is the situation) or with reference to author/title, and always analyze quotations for significance. Don't overuse quotations or let them talk for you. Better to blend in bits and pieces into your own writing than to incorporate large chunks. Smooth integration is the mark of a mature writer.

1. Introduce a quotation with a complete sentence and a colon.

Example: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states his purpose for going into the woods: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Example: Thoreau's philosophy might be summed up best by his repeated request for people to ignore the insignificant details of life: "Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!"

Example: Thoreau ends his essay with a metaphor: "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in."

This is an easy rule to remember: if you use a complete sentence to introduce a quotation, you need a colon after the sentence. Be careful not to confuse a colon (:) with a semicolon (;). Using a comma in this situation will most likely create a comma splice (a run-on with a comma), one of the serious sentence-boundary errors.

2. Use an introductory or explanatory phrase, but not a complete sentence, separated from the quotation with a comma.

Example: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states his purpose for going into the woods when he says, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Example: Thoreau suggests the consequences of making ourselves slaves to progress when he says, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."

Example: Thoreau asks, "Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?"

If the author is unclear, add a title and the complete name.

Example: According to transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."

You should use a comma to separate your own words from the quotation when your introductory or explanatory phrase ends with a verb such as "says," "said," "thinks," "believes," "pondered," "recalls," "questions," and "asks" (and many more).

3. Use short quotations--only a few words--as part of your own sentence. (most sophisticated)

Example: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states that his retreat to the woods around Walden Pond was motivated by his desire "to live deliberately" and to face only "the essential facts of life."

Example: Although Thoreau "drink[s] at" the stream of Time, he can "detect how shallow it is."

All of the methods for integrating quotations are correct, but you should avoid relying too much on just one method. Use a variety of methods and notice the punctuation!

If there are no parenthetical citations in the sentences (no author's name and page number in parentheses), the commas and periods go inside the final quotation mark ("like this."). If parenthetical, punctuation goes after the parentheses. "Blah blah" (67).

Integrating Quotations Smoothly into Text

There are three main ways to TIE quotations smoothly into text:

"T" - Tag

"You brute. You brute," Holden mutters as he leaves the compound where he and Ameera have spent many happy hours (37).

"Secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese," Orwell confides (4).

"I" - Introduce

As Holden leaves the compound where he and Ameera have spent many happy hours, he mutters, "You brute. You brute" (37).

Orwell confides, "[He] was all for the Burmese" (4).

NOTE: Use brackets if you need to change the form of a word to blend into the quotation smoothly; here, the original "I" was changed to "He."

"E" - Embed

Holden mutters, "You brute. You brute," as he leaves the compound where he and Ameera have spent many happy hours (37).

Orwell was "all for the Burmese" and hated working as an agent of the British Empire in Burma (4).

Generally, long quotations are to be avoided. It is more sophisticated to blend "bits into your own thoughts. When a long quotation (four or more lines) is absolutely essential, it should be set off from the text. Still, it is important to introduce the quotation and "set off" text is preceded by a complete sentence and a colon:

George Orwell had a difficult time acting as a police officer in Lower Burma. He was frustrated by his conflicting need to maintain law and order while remaining faithful to the idea that the Burmese had the right to be free:

I was in a quandary. All of this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time, I had already made up my mind that imperialism was evil, and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it, the better. Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters (4).

NOTE: When long quotations are set off from the text, they do not require quotation marks. Indent each line of the quotation (select all – tab). The right margin remains the same as the body of the paper. Spacing is the same as the body of the paper.