



TIPS FOR INCORPORATING QUOTATIONS

This handout is designed to help you smoothly incorporate quotations into your essay. We offer tips on how to decide whether (and how much) to quote, formatting guidelines, and suggestions for working quotations into the fabric of your paper.

TO QUOTE OR NOT TO QUOTE

When you're deciding whether or not to quote a line or passage, it may be useful to consider the following questions:

- **Who is your paper for?** In some disciplines, particularly the sciences, quoting is frowned upon. For these classes, it's much better to paraphrase or summarize an idea (be sure to cite your source!) than to quote.
- **How much do you need to quote?** Include as few of someone else's words as possible. Remember, it's difficult to make your case when you're not the one speaking!

FORMATTING YOUR QUOTATION

- **Check the guidelines for your discipline;** you may need to include block quotes if the quotation runs long or formatting indicators if you're quoting something like poetry. Links to formatting guidelines are available on the DEWC website on the "Student Resources for Writing" page.

AVOIDING "QUOTE BOMBS"

Although it may be obvious to you how the quotation you've chosen supports your argument, it's a mistake to assume that the connection will be obvious to your reader. When including quotations, it's important to introduce the quote and to transition clearly back to your own voice. There are several ways to do this:

- **Use strong verbs that signal how the quote fits into your argument.** "Says" and "states" are particularly weak verbs. But if you tell your reader that an author "explains," "responds," "observes," "argues," or "suggests," then you're implicitly explaining how that argument fits into your own.
- **Introduce the quotation by explaining directly how it fits into your argument.** Try adding a sentence in which you explain how the quotation functions in relationship to your argument before you include it.

If you're contrasting two ideas then you might say, Lewis offers us another view of Kinnell, praising him as a poet whose "later work became looser and more personal, with ample space for woods poems and flights of fancy" (A29).
- **Follow the quotation by giving the reader a "takeaway" idea.** You could summarize the quotation or you could further explain its relevance, or both.

In his emphasis on the personal nature of Kinnell's work, Lewis draws an important connection between Kinnell and the confessional poets.