

Once you've carefully selected the quotations that you want to use, your next job is to weave those quotations into your text. The words that precede and follow a quotation are just as important as the quotation itself. You can think of each quote as the filling in a sandwich: it may be tasty on its own, but it's messy to eat without some bread on either side of it. Your words can serve as the "bread" that helps readers digest each quote easily. Below are four guidelines for setting up and following up quotations.

In illustrating these four steps, we'll use as our example, Franklin Roosevelt's famous quotation, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

1. PROVIDE CONTEXT FOR EACH QUOTATION.

Do not rely on quotations to tell your story for you. It is your responsibility to provide your reader with context for the quotation. The context should set the basic scene for when, possibly where, and under what circumstances the quotation was spoken or written. So, in providing context for our above example, you might write:

When Franklin Roosevelt gave his inaugural speech on March 4, 1933, he addressed a nation weakened and demoralized by economic depression.

2. ATTRIBUTE EACH QUOTATION TO ITS SOURCE.

Tell your reader who is speaking. Here is a good test: try reading your text aloud. Could your reader determine without looking at your paper where your quotations begin? If not, you need to attribute the quote more noticeably.

Avoid getting into the "he/she said" attribution rut! There are many other ways to attribute quotes besides this construction. Here are a few alternative verbs, usually followed by "that":

add

remark

exclaim

announce

reply

state

declare

criticize

proclaim

note

complain

opine

observe

think

note

Different reporting verbs are preferred by different disciplines, so pay special attention to these in your disciplinary reading. If you're unfamiliar with the meanings of any of these words or others you find in your reading, consult a dictionary before using them.

3. EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE QUOTATION.

Once you've inserted your quotation, along with its context and attribution, don't stop! Your reader still needs your assessment of why the quotation holds significance for your paper. Using our Roosevelt example, if you were writing a paper on the first one-hundred days of FDR's administration, you might follow the quotation by linking it to that topic:

With that message of hope and confidence, the new president set the stage for his next one-hundred days in office and helped restore the faith of the American people in their government.

4. PROVIDE A CITATION FOR THE QUOTATION.

All quotations, just like all paraphrases, require a formal citation. For more details about particular citation formats, see the UNC Libraries [citation tutorial](#). In general, you should remember one rule of thumb: Place the parenthetical reference or footnote/endnote number after—not within—the closed quotation mark.

Roosevelt declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" (Roosevelt, Public Papers, 11).

Roosevelt declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."¹

HOW DO I EMBED A QUOTATION INTO A SENTENCE?

In general, avoid leaving quotes as sentences unto themselves. Even if you have provided some context for the quote, a quote standing alone can disrupt your flow. Take a look at this example:

Hamlet denies Rosencrantz's claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression. "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2).

Standing by itself, the quote's connection to the preceding sentence is unclear. There are several ways to incorporate a quote more smoothly:

LEAD INTO THE QUOTE WITH A COLON.

Hamlet denies Rosencrantz's claim that thwarted ambition caused his depression: "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space" (Hamlet 2.2).

The colon announces that a quote will follow to provide evidence for the sentence's claim.

INTRODUCE OR CONCLUDE THE QUOTE BY ATTRIBUTING IT TO THE SPEAKER. IF YOUR ATTRIBUTION PRECEDES THE

HOW DO I COMBINE QUOTATION MARKS
WITH OTHER PUNCTUATION MARKS?

remains within the quotation mark because it is indicating the excited tone in which the coach yelled the command. Thus, the exclamation mark is considered to be part of the original quotation.

HOW DO I INDICATE QUOTATIONS WITHIN QUOTATIONS?

If you are quoting a passage that contains a quotation, then you use single quotation marks for the internal quotation. Quite rarely, you quote a passage that has a quotation within a quotation. In that rare instance, you would use double quotation marks for the second internal quotation.

Here's an example of a quotation within a quotation:

In "The Emperor's New Clothes," Hans Christian Andersen wrote, "'But the Emperor has nothing on at all!' cried a little child."

Remember to consult your style guide to determine how to properly cite a quote within a quote.

WHEN DO I USE THOSE THREE DOTS (. . .)?

Whenever you want to leave out material from within a quotation, you need to use an ellipsis, which is a series of three periods, each of which should be preceded and followed by a space. So, an

“The Writing Center is located on the UNC campus . . .”

“Nobody understood me,” recalled Danish immigrant Esther Hansen.

INCLUDING SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION THAT YOUR READER NEEDS IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE QUOTATION.

For example, if you were quoting someone’s nickname, you might want to let your reader know the full name of that person in brackets.

“The principal of the school told Billy [William Smith] that his contract would be terminated.”

Similarly, if a quotation referenced an event with which the reader might be unfamiliar, you could identify that event in brackets.

“We completely revised our political strategies after the strike [of 1934].”

INDICATING THE USE OF NONSTANDARD GRAMMAR OR SPELLING.

In rare situations, you may quote from a text that has nonstandard grammar, spelling, or word

Not

“[T]he memory of our army days remained with us the rest of our lives,” commented Joe Brown, a World War II veteran.

WORKS CONSULTED

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the [UNC Libraries citation tutorial](#).

Barzun, Jacques, and Henry F. Graff. *The Modern Researcher*. 6th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2004.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6th ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.



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