QUOTATION BASICS:
INTEGRATING SOURCES AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

KEY TERMS

QUOTATION: Words, phrases, and sentences that are copied exactly from an author or speaker.

PARAPHRASE: A retelling of an author's argument, stories, or ideas in your own words, presenting key information and details from the original text.

CITATION: A citation indicates the source for a quotation or paraphrase. There are different citation styles for different disciplines, but MLA format, used in English classes, consists of the author's name and page number (in parentheses) in the text, and a Works Cited list at the end of the paper. See your handbook for specifics.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is claiming as your own any work done by someone else. When you are summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting directly from a text, you must attribute the ideas and words to the original author by citing; otherwise, you are plagiarizing.

"SIGNAL" OR "LEAD-IN" VERBS
You can use these verbs (and many others) for variety and to indicate how you feel about the material you are quoting. Be sure to consider the meaning of each word, and what it will say about how you feel about the source.
- acknowledges • admits • agrees • alleges
- asserts • assumes • believes • challenges
- claims • comments • complains
- concedes • concludes • confirms
- considers • criticizes • declares • defines
- denies • describes • disagrees • discusses
- emphasizes • explains • finds • illustrates
- implies • indicates • insists • introduces
- mentions • observes • proposes • reasons
- rejects • remarks • reports • responds
- shows • states • suggests • uses

How do I use Quotations?

- Use quotation marks on either side of words (even just a few words) taken from another author or speaker.
- Be sure to copy the original exactly.
- Avoid dropping or dumping your quotations, which means surprising your reader with quotation marks and someone else's wording. This can be jarring for readers, who like to be prepared for the shift in voice. There are three basic ways to introduce shorter quotations:

1) Lead into the quotation directly with a signal phrase such as "x says," or "x writes," or "x argues."
   For example: Eavan Boland writes, "For the moment I could make a single experience out of the fractures of language, country and womanhood that had brought me here" (86).

2) Integrate the wording of the quotation (or part of it) into your own sentence structure.
   For example: Object Lessons describes her realization as combining "the fractures of language, country and womanhood," though the experience was only momentary (Boland 86).

3) Explain the significance or context of the quotation (without directly stating its obvious meaning) and use a colon to indicate that the quotation itself restates/exemplifies what you've just written.
   For example: Eavan Boland describes the realization she had while studying Latin: "For the moment I could make a single experience out of the fractures of language, country and womanhood that had brought me here" (86).

Regardless of the lead-in you use, you must make the quotation significant for your paper. This is your responsibility as the writer, and you can't assume your reader will understand why you have used the quotation or that she will understand the quotation as you do. Make a habit of following up on your quotations with commentary and explanation.

How do I decide when to quote directly and when to paraphrase?
Basic, factual information and concepts can usually be paraphrased. Reserve direct quotations for particularly memorable phrases or things you simply couldn't put in a better, clearer way.

What if I want to quote a large amount?
Quotations of more than four typed lines should be double-spaced (like the rest of your paper) and indented ten spaces from
the left margin. You'll still need a lead-in or signal phrase, however, which should end with a colon.

In “Just and Unjust War,” historian Howard Zinn argues that even seemingly justified wars have negative effects:

It seems that once an initial judgment has been made that a war is just, there is a tendency to stop thinking, to assume then that everything done on behalf of victory is morally acceptable. I had myself participated in the bombing of cities, without even considering whether there was any relationship between what I was doing and the elimination of fascism in the world. Thus a war that apparently begins with a “good” cause—stopping aggression, helping victims, or punishing brutality—ends with its own aggression, creates more victims than before, and brings out more brutality than before, on both sides. (259)

Notice that this block quotation is not enclosed in quotation marks: instead, the fact that it is indented sets it off as quoted text.

**What if I need to alter a quotation?**

Alterations should be made only in rare circumstances, must not change the meaning or intention of the original, and must follow these rules:

- You can leave out part of the middle of a quotation ONLY by indicating the missing part with ellipses placed within brackets. For instance, if you were quoting part of the above passage from Zinn but wanted to focus and shorten your quotation, you might omit some sentences or parts of sentences:

  In “Just and Unjust War,” Howard Zinn argues that even seemingly justified wars have negative effects: “Thus a war that apparently begins with a ‘good’ cause [...] ends with its own aggression, creates more victims than before, and brings out more brutality than before, on both sides” (259).

- Brackets can be used to insert words into quotations to make them flow more smoothly or for clarification. For instance, if June Jordan originally said, “Most of the students knew and respected and like Jordan. Many of them came from the very neighborhood where the murder had occurred” (135), and you wanted to quote only the second sentence, you might do the following:

  As Jordan observes, “Many of them [the students] came from the very neighborhood where the murder had occurred” (135).

**What if I quote something that is already in quotation marks in the original?**

- As you can see with the word ‘good’ in the example above from Howard Zinn, any words that were originally in double quotation marks are placed in single quotation marks. As usual, you must use double quotation marks to indicate the start and end of the passage that you are quoting.

**When do I have to cite?**

- Direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks and accompanied by in-text citations. This is true even if you use only one or two distinctive words from another source.

- Even though they are in your own words, paraphrases must be accompanied by in-text citations in order to attribute the ideas you are representing to the original source.

- Include a Works Cited page (MLA) or References page (APA) that gives complete publication information for all of your citations.

Sometimes writers accidentally plagiarize when they are unsure about the rules and conventions of citation. **If you are unsure about whether or not you are plagiarizing, you should speak with your instructor.**

**Are there times when I don’t need to cite?**

If you come up with an idea on your own, or if an idea or fact is such common knowledge that it could be found in many sources, it is not necessary to document it.