

# Student Learning Zone | Quick Guides

## Using direct quotations in your writing

A direct quotation (quote) is a word-for-word extract from a source. Using quotes can be an important way to include sources into your writing, and knowing how to use them appropriately as evidence will help you practice academic integrity and demonstrate your understanding to the marker.

### When (and if) to use quotes

For students, the goal when writing assessments is to demonstrate their understanding to the marker. Using paraphrases demonstrates a much higher level of skill and understanding than using quotes because paraphrasing requires you to understand the source well enough to put it into your own words.

As a general rule, students are therefore expected to use direct quotations sparingly. Because of the varying disciplinary conventions around the acceptability of quotations as evidence, it is advisable to check with the Unit teaching staff. In some disciplines, students should use NO quotes at all.

There are three common reasons to use quotations in assessments:

1. if the reference itself is famous
2. you want to respond to the wording of the quote (e.g. agree/disagree)
3. when you need to include a precise definition or statement of the nature of a concept, principle or theory.

When it is acceptable to use quotes, you can still show a high level of understanding by making sure the quote is:

- relevant to the point you are making in the paragraph (e.g. it acts as relevant evidence)
- from a credible, current source
- blended into the rest of your writing (e.g. inserted into a sentence, introduced and unpacked)
- correctly formatted and referenced.

### Referencing and formatting quotes

All quotes must be referenced and have page numbers noted in in-text referencing (if the source has page numbers). Refer to the relevant LibGuide for your discipline on how to reference different types of sources.

For example, if using **APA 7<sup>th</sup> referencing style** to reference a quote from an e-book without page numbers, include the section heading to indicate where in the text the quote is taken from.

Short and long quotations are formatted differently in most referencing styles.

#### Example: Short quotations (APA 7<sup>th</sup>)

Short quotations (less than 40 words) are placed within double quotation marks – “.....” – and inserted into a sentence. The page number appears *after* the quotation.

**Driscoll (2010)** argues recycling is “the least cost-effective way to reduce environmental damage caused by massproduction and mass consumption” (p. 21).

It has been argued that recycling is “the least cost-effective way to reduce environmental damage caused by massproduction and mass consumption” (Driscoll, 2010, p. 21).

## Example: Long quotations (APA 7<sup>th</sup>)

The formatting of long quotations (40 words and longer) is slightly different.

Turner et al. (2010) provide a good explanation of the way assessment writing at university involves drawing on and using relevant literature, or existing knowledge:

The most distinctive aspect of university education is the way it is linked to the literature. While assessment is structured to encourage a student to develop new ideas rather than repeat what is already known, it also demands that those ideas are developed from and related to the literature.

(p. 62)

Cite source (with page #) after quotation's final punctuation, OR cite in narrative before quotation, with page # after quotation

No empty line before and after

1.5 cm indent

No quotation marks

Same line spacing and font size as rest of document

## Modifying quotes

It is acceptable to omit words from within a quote, if this does not affect the meaning of the quote. Sometimes this is preferred if part of the quote is superfluous to your reason for using it. In that case, you replace the omitted word(s) with an ellipsis (three dots) (APA 7<sup>th</sup> and Harvard).

While assessment is structured to encourage a student to develop new ideas ..., it also demands that those ideas are developed from and related to the literature. (Turner et al., 2010, p. 62)

Sometimes it may be necessary to add a word of your own to the quote to clarify a meaning or making the quote fit in with your syntax. This addition should be placed within square brackets [ ].

## Blending quotes into your own writing

To use quotes effectively, as evidence, it is important to blend them into your writing. The key to effective blending is to **INTRODUCE** a quote before it is actually included in your writing and then **UNPACK** it for the reader. Doing this turns the direct quotation into a good piece of evidence, to back up your point for the paragraph.

**Introducing quotes before they appear in your writing** will help you to:

- clearly show the reader you have included others' words in your writing
- provide a smooth reading path for the reader by naming the author and identifying the topic of the quote
- include your evaluation of the expertise of the author, or the credibility of the source.

**Unpacking a quote after it has been inserted into your writing** will help you to:

- link the ideas/information in the quote to the rest of the paragraph
- demonstrate your understanding of the quote.

## Practical TIPS for blending quotes into your writing

- ALWAYS reference direct quotations in-text
- NEVER start a paragraph with a quote
- NEVER finish a paragraph with a quote
- NEVER run quotes together one after the other.

## Techniques for introducing quotes

Introducing direct quotations is an important part of academic writing. There are four key techniques used to introduce direct quotations into your writing.

### Naming the author

This technique shows the reader that you are now presenting others' words in your writing.

### Example

Dodge and Brown (2012) say "new media has the potential to be used to generate new meanings, values, relationships, and personal identities" (p. 21).

## Using a reporting verb

Reporting verbs can be used to characterise the source and the claims made by the author in the work. This means reporting verbs can be an effective way to demonstrate your understanding and include your critical judgement.

See [Using reporting verbs to introduce evidence](#) Quick Guide for commonly used reporting verbs.

### Example

Dodge and Brown (2012) reveal that “new media has the potential to be used to generate new meanings, values, relationships, and personal identities” (p. 21).

Here, the verb ‘reveal’, characterises the source as objective, and author claims as uncovering a phenomenon. The writer has used reporting verbs effectively to characterise and make judgements about the source, and the types of claims made by the authors.

## Indicating what it is about

Noting the general subject of a quote is an important way to introduce and blend others’ words into your writing. Doing this ‘sets up’ the quote for the reader, and makes your assessment much easier to understand.

### Example

Dodge and Brown (2012) explore possible impacts of blogs, online gaming, and computer games, contending that “new media has the potential to be used to generate new meanings, values, relationships, and personal identities” (p. 21)

Here, the writer indicates the general subject of the quote in order to better blend others’ words. This technique works by moving from the general to the specific. The general subject of the quote is noted, and then the specific words from the source are included.

## Indicating the credibility of the source

When using an important source for the first time in an assessment, it is usual to establish the *expertise* of the author, and the *relevance* and *credibility* of the source.

### Example

In their study about Australian media consumption over the last decade, media theorists, Dodge and Brown (2012, p. 21) contend “new media has the potential to be used to generate new meanings, values, relationships, and personal identities”.

Establishing the expertise of authors and the credibility of sources used in your assessments is important for two main reasons. Doing so:

- shows the marker you have used expert opinion and credible sources in assessments and this adds to the quality and credibility of your writing
- establishes the expertise of an author, and the credibility of sources, and this demonstrates your understanding, and opens up space for you to evaluate sources and add in your judgements (when unpacking direct quotes).

## Techniques and prompts for unpacking quotes

When writing assessments at university, it is your job to demonstrate your understanding and critical thinking. Using direct quotations sometimes makes this hard. However, unpacking techniques can help overcome this challenge.

While selecting relevant direct quotes from credible disciplinary sources is the first step, unpacking involves *explaining*, *evaluating*, or *applying* it.

### Explaining the meaning and relevance of the quote

What is the quote about?

Does it add to the topic I am writing about?

Why did I include this quote?

How does it illustrate the point I am making in this paragraph?  
How are the ideas expressed in the quote relevant to my topic/point?  
What does the quote explain or clarify?

### **Evaluating the claims contained in the quote (to further develop your discussion)**

What are the strengths of the ideas and claims made in the quote?  
How can the ideas or claims contained in the quote be linked back to the point I am making in this paragraph?  
What are the limits or weaknesses of the ideas and claims made in the quote?  
How can I link these limits or weaknesses to the point I am making in this paragraph?

### **Applying the concepts or ideas offered in the quote to analyse an example, explain an issue, or solve a problem**

What are the key ideas or approaches contained in the quotation?  
How are they relevant to my point in the paragraph?  
Can I use the ideas or approach contained in the quotation to develop my discussion in the rest of the paragraph?  
Can I use the ideas or approach contained in the quotation to analyse an example, explain an issue, or solve a problem?

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