

QUOTATION INTEGRATION

*This QuickSheet does not include citation instruction. See the relevant citation style guide for your field to properly cite your sources.

WHAT IS QUOTATION INTEGRATION?

When we talk about “quotation integration,” we’re in fact talking about making our writing as **fluid and easy to read** as possible. For this reason, quoted material should fit seamlessly into your own writing. Imagine deleting the quotation marks from the sentence to the right. Would you have any idea that the material was quoted without them there? No. And that’s the intention: quotation marks indicate that the words between them are not your own, and that is *all* (other than your citation) that should indicate that you are quoting another author.

Robert Louis Stevenson aptly describes the process of writing when he says, “the difficulty of literature is not to write, but to write what you mean.”

THREE RULES OF THUMB...

#1: QUOTATIONS MUST NEVER STAND ALONE.

You must always introduce or follow a quotation with your own words.

- ✗ E.L. Doctorow compares writing to a mental illness. “Writing is a socially acceptable form of schizophrenia.”
- ✓ E.L. Doctorow compares writing to a mental illness when he claims that “Writing is a socially acceptable form of schizophrenia.”

Some keywords you might use to introduce quotations include: *suggest, explain, state, claim, show, argue, and write.*

- ✓ Procrastination is a challenge all writers face. As popular writer Octavia Butler explains, “Even professional writers have days when they’d rather clean the toilet than do the writing.”
- ✓ In his novel, *In the Skin of a Lion*, Michael Ondaatje writes: “The first sentence of every novel should be: ‘Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human.’”

You may also insert a quotation into your own words without introducing the author first.

- ✓ Procrastination is a challenge all writers face because “Even professional writers have days when they’d rather clean the toilet than do the writing.”
- ✓ Michael Ondaatje comments on the process of writing in his novel by ordering his readers to “trust” him, and by assuring them that “this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human.”

#2: CHANGE THE CONTENTS OF THE QUOTATION ONLY WHEN NECESSARY.

Because you must integrate quotations into your own language, sometimes you will need to alter the quotation itself to make the wording (ie., the grammar) of the quote “agree” with your own grammar. Any changes you make to the original quote must be indicated with **square brackets**.

ACADEMIC

- ✘ Science fiction writer Isaac Asimov loves writing so much that “If my doctor told me I had only six minutes to live, I wouldn't brood. I'd type a little faster.”
 - ✓ Science fiction writer Isaac Asimov loves writing so much that “If [his] doctor told [him] [he] had only six months to live, [he] wouldn't brood. [He'd] type a little faster.”
 - ✘ Hannah Arendt suggests that stories “reveals meaning without the error of defining it.”
 - ✓ Hannah Arendt suggests that stories “[reveal] meaning without the error of defining it.”
- NOTE: Never making any changes but those that are grammatically necessary. Never make a change to a quotation that changes its author's intention or meaning.

#3: QUOTE ONLY WHAT YOU NEED TO MAKE YOUR POINT.

Remember that quotation integration is about making your writing as fluid and easy to read as possible, so **do not clutter** your writing with unnecessarily long quotations. Especially **avoid block quotations**. While being careful not to change the original intent of your source, quote only what you need to make your point. This means you might only quote a phrase or even a single word, instead of an entire sentence or paragraph.

- ✘ Critics of the university claim that university teaching can stifle creative writing. Flannery O'Connor disagrees: “Everywhere I go I'm asked if I think the university stifles writers. My opinion is that they don't stifle enough of them. There's many a bestseller that could have been prevented by a good teacher.”
- ✓ Critics of the university claim that university teaching can stifle creative writing. Flannery O'Connor disagrees; he wittily suggests that more writers should be stifled in universities and remarks that “many a bestseller could have been prevented by a good teacher.”

HOW TO INTRODUCE A QUOTATION WITH CORRECT PUNCTUATION

If the phrase introducing a quotation is a complete sentence, insert a full colon before the quotation marks.

For example: *The author writes: “we cannot truly know something until we have expressed it.”*

If the phrase introducing the quotation is an incomplete sentence, insert a comma.

For example: *The author claims, “writing is a process.”*

No punctuation is needed when, if you remove the quotation marks, you do not need to add punctuation to make the sentence grammatically correct.

For example: *The author claims that “writing ain't easy.”*

REFERENCES

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- Vanier College (n.d.). *Integrating quotes*. Retrieved from <http://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/tlc/tipsheets/writing/integrating-quotes.pdf>