

Integrating Quotations: Some Techniques



(Maxwell)

To “integrate” is to make a single thing out of multiple components. Ground beef, tomato sauce, chopped ancho chilies, grated cheddar cheese, pico de gallo, cilantro, sour cream, and soft corn tortillas sitting on a countertop are a loose assemblage; cook and form them together rightly proportioned, that is, integrate them, and you have enchiladas. It’s a transformation.

A research-based paper is not an enchilada, of course, but writing such a paper does require the combining of sundry ingredients into a harmonious whole. Among these ingredients are quotations from your sources.

Before proceeding further, let’s look at the general Quoting Rules (also available in Google Slides, this folder):

- 1) Quote accurately.
- 2) Quote sparingly, selectively.
- 3) Use an ellipsis [. . .] to indicate an omission.

- 4) Use square brackets [] to indicate an addition, change, or clarification.
- 5) Always introduce or integrate quotes.
- 6) No free-standing quotes. (Rule 6 is another way of stating Rule 5.)
- 7) Use the present tense of the verb when you introduce a quote.
- 8) Use single quotation marks around a quote within a quote.

Quotations should be combined with your own writing, just as should ingredients in a recipe. To that end, you should adhere strictly to Quoting Rules 5 and 6: each time you place a quotation into your paper, take care to integrate that quotation with at least a few words of your own. There should be no free-standing quotes in your essay. By definition, a free-standing quote occupies an entire sentence or more of your essay and is not integrated into any sentence written by you. Here is an example of a free-standing quote:

There are stories practically every week about drug-related violence in schools--even in elementary schools. Home-schooling parents say they want to protect their children from dangerous environments. "There are no drugs in their bathrooms or switchblades in the hallways" (Allis 86).

Note that the quoted sentence is "alone." It is not connected grammatically to the sentence that precedes it nor presumably to any sentence following, as it is punctuated with a period. There are two problems with this:

- 1) **Loss of Voice.** Whether you know it or not, you have a distinctive writing voice, a voice just as unique in the world and recognizable as your speaking voice. When you are writing an essay, particularly a persuasive essay, it is very important that your voice remain dominant and in control of the flow of information and thought. Your reader must feel in contact with your voice at all times. This is how you sustain your authority and trust with the reader. Each time you quote an outside source, you are letting in another voice. A free-standing quote relinquishes control to that other voice for an entire sentence. You should not let yourself disappear from the reader like this. Too much loss of connection and the reader will lose faith in you. Where are you?
- 2) **The Appearance of Laziness.** When you place your name at the top of the first page of your paper, you are guaranteeing to all readers that you wrote the paper, every sentence of it. You are claiming it as your work. Any borrowed words are clearly signaled by quotation marks and are grammatically integrated with words of your own. The free-standing quote illustrated above is an entire sentence not written by the writer of the essay in which it appears. It was written by someone else. Remember this: quoting is not writing; quoting is copying. You should consider yourself obligated to invest your own energy into the composition of every sentence of your own essay.

All that said, in many cases it is very easy to correct a free-standing quote. Often, if we look closely at the sentence immediately preceding the quote (as in the example above), we see that

in fact it does logically introduce the quote. Thus, a simple change to the punctuation will make this introductory function explicit and integrate the quote: replace the period after “environments” with a colon.

There are stories practically every week about drug-related violence in schools—even in elementary schools. Home-schooling parents say they want to protect their children from dangerous environments: “There are no drugs in their bathrooms or switchblades in the hallways” (Allis 86).

Quoting Techniques

Using a colon in this way is just one of many techniques for integrating quotations. We will now explore those other techniques. First, though, here’s something to keep in mind as we proceed: two salient qualities of a skilled writer are versatility and resourcefulness; nimble writers do not let themselves get stuck performing the same maneuvers in exactly the same way over and over. They have command of the diverse resources of the language (to be found in its wealth of grammatical, syntactical, and semantic potentials), and they constantly vary their technical means. Such flexibility is desirable as much in the art of integrating quotations as it is in any other component of writing. Indeed, in research-based writing, where one is incorporating so much of the work of other writers, the danger of getting oneself locked into a repetitive pattern of mannerisms may be even greater than in other forms of writing. Thus, a word to the wise: stay light on your feet. Dance free, with grace.

Probably the most common technique for integrating quotations is to employ a simple **attributive phrase**, also often referred to as a **signal phrase**. Most attributive phrases contain an **attributive verb**; only one does not (see “According to” below).

For the following demonstration we will use an often-quoted line by the great Irish poet William Butler Yeats.

- Integrating with an attributive verb, a.k.a. an introductory verb (all attributive verbs below in bold)
 - 1) Attributive verb with comma:

W.B. Yeats **states**, “In dreams begins responsibility.”

The verb is followed by a comma just as it would be in conventional written dialogue.

- 2) Direct integration using an attributive verb with “that” and no comma:

Yeats **claims** that “[i]n dreams begins responsibility.”

It is a common mistake among writers applying this technique to place a comma after the word “that.” There appears to be a widely held misconception that all full-sentence quotations like

this must be preceded by a comma. Not true. “That” is the function word for a relative clause. We never place a single comma between “that” and the rest of the clause in any circumstance, quoting or otherwise.

Also note that the quotation is an independent clause, i.e., a complete sentence. In its original version, the first letter (I) is capitalized as required by the rules of capitalization. When we employ the “attributive verb with comma” technique--1) above-- we retain the capital letter. However, in formal writing it is considered inappropriate to use a sentence capital at a point in a sentence where there is no pause or break, e.g., a point such as immediately following “that.” Therefore, in applying technique 2) we change the capital letter to lower case. Since this is an alteration of the original quote, we indicate what we have done by placing square brackets around the change. (See Quoting Rules, Rule 4.)

This method of quoting is called “direct integration” because the integrative material reads directly into the quotation without punctuation.

- 3) Integrating with an attributive verb in the middle of the quote with set-off commas:

“In dreams,” Yeats **argues**, “begins responsibility.”

Attributive verb phrases are, to some extent, “free.” They can be moved around in a sentence. We can place them before, in the middle of, or at the end of a quotation. It is worthwhile to keep this movability in mind when we use attributive verbs so that we do not get stuck, as noted above, executing a job in just one way all the time. However, be aware that an attributive verb phrase cannot be placed just anywhere in the middle of a quotation. We must look for a natural seam in the passage, a place where the different grammatical components of the sentence are joined together. In the example above, the attributive verb is located between a prepositional phrase, “in dreams,” and the main verb of the sentence, “begins,” a natural seam. It would be quite disruptive to place it anywhere else, between “in” and “dreams,” for example.

Do not forget to place commas both before and after the phrase when it is placed in the middle.

A Crucial Note about Attributive Verbs: See Quoting Rules, Rule 7. As the preceding examples demonstrate, in research-based writing, when we quote from an outside written source (and when we paraphrase, too, for that matter), we always use the present tense of the verb in reference to that source. Thus, it is “Yeats **states**,” not “Yeats **stated**.” This convention sometimes seems odd to student writers. True, any passage we are quoting would have been in fact written in the past, but consider this: writing preserves thought; whatever the quote says, if it was said in a piece of writing, then it is being said there still, and we are holding out the passage for the reader’s consideration in the reader’s “now,” as it were. This usage is sometimes referred to as “the textual present tense.”

Note: As previously explained, good writers are versatile writers. Try to vary your attributive verbs, but make sure they are fitting to the context. A list of attributive verbs may be found via a Google search. Beware, though, that the many such verbs you will find are not grammatically interchangeable, and many will not work in the research-based writing context. Choose carefully.

- Integrating with an attributive phrase that does not contain a verb

According to Yeats, “In dreams begins responsibility.”

“According to” is an adjective gerund. It is a simple and commonly used device. The phrase is punctuated with a comma and, like attributive verbs, can be moved around.

- Integrating with a colon

Yeats sounds a sobering note to those who would be visionaries: “In dreams begins responsibility.”

This is an excellent technique for integrating quotations, probably the most sophisticated. Note that the colon is preceded by an independent clause. This clause not only integrates the quotation but introduces it in a substantive way. It prepares the reader for the quote by providing a commentary on it. Here the writer is thoughtfully engaged with the quoted material, always a good thing.

- Direct integration of phrasal quotations

The quoted passages that we’ve looked at so far (just the two of them) are both independent clauses. Do not be misled by this. A quotation need not be a complete sentence. In fact, it is considered highly adept style to trim parts and pieces, i.e., phrases, from your source material and fit them neatly into sentences of your own construction. Like this:

Parents who home-school their children say that, though they know their kids may be missing out on some social learning, home is the only place where they can guarantee that there will be no “switchblades in the hallways” (Allis 86) of their kids’ learning environment.

Very smooth. This is a highly adaptive technique calling for considerable writerly agility. There are as many ways of performing this kind of direct integration as there are ways of composing a sentence. It’s a mix-and-match process, like adding pieces to a mosaic.

Using [sic] in a Quotation

Rule 1 of the Quoting Rules could not be simpler:

Quote accurately.

This means down to the letter, down to each mark of punctuation, etc., including any errors.

There is a reason why this is Rule Number 1: it is the cardinal rule of quoting; violating it is the cardinal sin. As writers of research-based essays, we make use of the words of other writers; we are honor-bound to copy those words with absolute fidelity when we place quotation marks around them. Misquoting someone is a serious trespass against them (as we may know from our own personal experience, if we've ever been misquoted). We may use an ellipsis (. . .) to omit something from the quote that is not necessary to our purpose if we can do so without mangling or distorting the passage (Rule 3); we can use square brackets ([]) to add something for clarification or make minor adjustments for grammatical merging (Rule 4), but otherwise we may not change anything. On occasion, a writing or printing error may appear in a passage we have chosen to quote. This occurs rarely, but it can happen (more often in the age of internet publishing). Sometimes a mistake slips past the editors. In quoting such a passage, it is not our job to correct the error; it is our job to quote accurately. Still, we do not want our reader to think it is our error. For this situation we have the device [sic] (meaning "as it appears"), which we place immediately following the error as a disclaimer. It tells our reader that we know it's an error, it's not our error, and we have reproduced the original passage exactly as we found it.

Again, it must be emphasized that occasions to use [sic] are rare. Still, we should know that it is there for us. That we need such a device at all should tell us just how important Rule 1 really is.

Here would be an example of an appropriate use of [sic]:

In his autobiography, Williams says (of his often angry father), "I knew he ment [sic] no harm to me."

Practice

Now let's try a little exercise.

Prompt: Read the following passage taken from a brief review of a video on texting while driving. Select **two** passages to quote, one a complete sentence, the other a brief phrase. Then, in the space provided here or on a separate sheet of paper, write a short passage of your own in which you

- 1) integrate the selected sentence-length quote with a colon;
- 2) integrate the selected phrase directly as a phrasal quote.

Don't worry. There is no one correct way of doing this exercise. Excellent possibilities are many. Try to apply the colon and phrasal quote techniques as just explained. An example of an acceptable response may be found on the next page.

Here's the passage to read:

Most experimental evidence shows that people who think that they are multitasking well are actually not paying sufficient attention to all the tasks at hand. In the case of trying to text while driving, this miscalculation can be fatal. This program, designed for classroom use, adopts the docudrama pattern familiar to most TV watchers to bring this fact home. The danger of texting while driving is dramatized via the true story of the tragic death of a teenage girl. It is then reinforced through interviews with the young woman's parents, family, and friends. We also see a group of youngsters as they try to text while driving a simulator and are brought to the realization that the danger is real for them as well. VERDICT To the extent that it is possible for any program to alter the behavior of teens, this video would be worth a try.

By Harold D. Shane, mathematics emeritus, Baruch Coll., CUNY

Formal citation:

Shane, Harold D. "Texting and Driving: The Deadliest Distraction." *Library Journal* 140.6 (2015): <http://web.b.ebscohost.com>. Accessed 9 July 2020.

Write your response to the prompt here or on a separate sheet:

An acceptable response:

A mathematics emeritus at CUNY suggests that drivers who believe texting behind the wheel is perfectly safe are mistaken: “Most experimental evidence shows that people who think that they are multitasking well are actually not paying sufficient attention to all the tasks at hand.” For drivers who text, the sense of control is an illusion that “can be fatal” (Shane).

Happy quoting!

Image Source

Maxwell, Kristin. "Ground Beef Enchiladas." *Yellow Bliss Road*, 14 Apr. 2021.

<https://www.yellowblissroad.com/ground-beef-enchiladas>. Accessed 8 June 2021.