



Using Quotes

You can think of a quote as a “unit” with three parts:

[Introduction/Background] [“Quote”(Citation)] [Explanation/Analysis]

The introduction and explanation surround and support your use of the quote.

You should always introduce a quote - it cannot be its own sentence.

Using the quote

Ask yourself, what’s the main message in the quote that I want the reader to focus on? **Why is the quote significant? How does the quote support my claim/thesis?** The answers may seem apparent to you, but not everyone interprets things in the same way, so it’s a good idea to explain to your readers how you interpret the quote and how it relates to your paragraph and claims.

From Dr. Smith’s findings, it is clear that finding time for sleep is not the only problem facing students, but that even a consistent sleep schedule can only do so much if they are experiencing too much stress. Schools must address both aspects of this problem.

If you need to add words to a quote (for instance, to clarify what the quote is talking about), use brackets.

According to Dr. Smith, “Dave [a research participant] reported getting seven hours of sleep a night on average” (Smith 79).

If you need to omit words from a quote, use an ellipsis.

According to Dr. Smith, “The study concludes that students need more sleep, and... benefit from different schedules” (Smith 79).

Introducing the quote/Providing background

The first time you quote a source, it is important to provide the author’s credibility. Why should we trust what they say?

Harvard psychologist Jane Smith has conducted several studies on the sleep patterns of college students and published her findings in the nation’s foremost scientific journals.

Once you have told the reader about this source’s credibility, integrate the quote into your own sentence using one of the following strategies:

Explanatory sentence + a colon: You can attach a quote to another sentence with just a colon if that sentence helps to explain the main idea in the quote.

Dr. Smith observes how extended stress affects students’ ability to sleep: “QUOTE” (Smith 79).

Integrate the quote into your own words: Create a whole sentence by combining your own words with a quote. *If, as Dr. Smith writes, “QUOTE,” then simply sleeping in on weekends or scheduling classes later in the day is not enough (Smith 79).*

Quote introduced with signal phrase, such as “says,” “according to,” “argues,” etc., with a comma between the signal phrase and the quote. This is the most common way of introducing quotes.

According to Dr. Smith, “QUOTE” (Smith 79).