



# USING QUOTATIONS IN ACADEMIC WRITING

A common problem when writing is using a quotation with no context. Only use a quote if it is helping demonstrate your understanding of your subject.

You should use a quote if it is written in a particular way - i.e. it is well-phrased or powerful, or it is a key explanation. If you are quoting the authority on a specific subject (the author of a theory for example), then this is acceptable as it shows that you have read and understood a key writer in the area, giving your work more credibility. The complete passage is interesting (or contentious), and you want to analyse it in detail. A quote should always be referenced using the page number it appears on.

An alternative to quoting is to paraphrase. This is a restatement of the quote in your own words (see an example in the box below). You will still need to reference this, but without the page number.

Any quotes used should be brief and used sparingly (too many or too long and they disrupt the flow of your essay). A lengthy quote may do all the work for you and explain something for your readers, but it is your voice that should be heard most prominently, with quotes from others used to strengthen your argument or show evidence for a position. You can paraphrase instead and maybe just use the key phrase as a quote. If nothing stands out as a key phrase, don't quote it.

Quotes should always be used in context; in their book on academic writing, Graff and Birkenstein call an unannounced quote a 'hit and run quotation' (2010, p. 44). They suggest that we should, instead, sandwich our quotations between an introduction, which sets up the quote, and end it with an explanation, unpacking what you understand by it.

You could set up a quote by saying:

According to....

In a recent report on...

Writing in.... X states that...

X disagrees with this point, stating...

To explain a quote:

In other words, X believes that...

In making this comment, X is...

I take this to mean that...

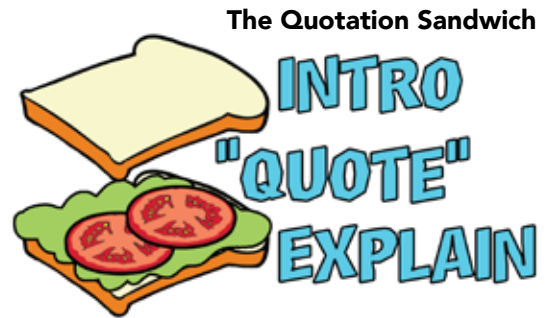
The essence of this argument is...

This suggests that...

This illustrates how...

This highlights the...

This indicates a link between...



**An example of a quotation sandwich, notice how the lengthy quotes in paragraph one have been made into a quotation sandwich in paragraph two:**

This paragraph draws heavily on 2 quotes from Robert E. Franken's book *Human Motivation*:

Franken describes being creative as: "In order to be creative, you need to be able to view things in new ways or from a different perspective. Among other things, you need to be able to generate new possibilities or new alternatives. Tests of creativity measure not only the number of alternatives that people can generate but the uniqueness of those alternatives" (Franken, 1994, p. 394). He also goes on to say: "Creativity is defined as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others" (ibid. p. 396).

These can be rewritten using more of my own words to paraphrase Franken and can apply his idea:

Being creative requires the ability to view things in new or different ways, and generating new options (Franken, 1994). Franken defines creativity as "the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others" (ibid. p. 396). Being creative then, can be a process applied to any situation, from education to entertainment. It is the approach that we take rather than the medium we use which demonstrates creativity.

## REFERENCES

Franken, R. E. (1994). *Human motivation*. Pacific Grove, Calif, Brooks/Cole Pub. Co.

Graff, G. and Birkenstein, C. (2010) 'They Say / I Say': The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing. 2nd edn. W. W. Norton & Company.