

Graebner's Advice on Citation of Source Material

While most students are aware of the need to cite the sources they use in their papers, many find challenging the mechanics of incorporating quoted material into their text. The following advice attempts to describe good practice in this area. This document assumes knowledge of how to avoid both the fact and the appearance of plagiarism.

I. Integration

Quoted material should never stand alone as independent sentences in your text. Since you use them to illustrate or demonstrate a specific point, quotations should be incorporated into a coherent thought that is phrased in one of your own sentences.

The quote needs some introduction, and certainly an explanation about its application to the topic. The latter you will provide in sentences following the quote (see below), but the former you must provide before the quote, so as to **“attach” it to the flow of your ideas**. The method you chose will depend on the structure of the quoted sentence or sentences. **Never let quoted material “float,” detached from your text.**

You must arrange the grammar and structure of your lead-in sentence so that the quote requires no changes, or only minimal ones, in order to make grammatical and syntactic sense. You must mark any changes to the quoted passage with square brackets []. Changes to ensure pronoun and verb agreement are almost always acceptable, as long as you mark them: **your alterations must not change the sense of the passage.**

1. Some quotations may appear following an introductory phrase that ends with either a comma, semicolon, or colon, depending upon the grammar of the phrase and the quote.¹

A. Dependent clause frame and an independent clause quotation

As the *rasquache* conceives of them, “movidas are the coping strategies you use to gain time, to make options, to retain hope” (Ybarra-Frausto, 191).

[Note that here I have decided to italicize the Spanish word in my own text. If I chose to italicize the Spanish that appears in roman letters in the original (“movidas”), I would have to say that I did so.]

B. Independent clause frame and an independent clause quotation

As the Border Patrol agents interrogate him, Johnny Tecate entertains irreverent thoughts about their faces: “[o]ne looks like John Wayne; another, the one with the computer, could be Clint Eastwood” (Udiarte, 207).

¹Thanks to Courtney Karr for her initial development of this section.

2. Other quotations may appear immediately following an introductory phrase, without punctuation between the two clauses.

Ybarra-Frausto stresses the humor of *rasquachismo*, describing the attitude as “witty, irreverent, and impertinent” (191).

[Note that here I can omit the author's name in the citation, since it has appeared in the sentence; if I quote only one work by this author, I need cite no title.]

The consummate practitioner of *rasquachismo* fashions his own world, an “environment replete with color, texture and pattern” (Ybarra-Frausto, 191).

[Here, I can not omit the name.]

3. Use “Block indented” quotes, possibly single spaced, when the cited material will run to more than four or five lines of typescript. The same rules about inclusion in the structure of your sentences apply. The line following the quote in your own prose is not indented--**remember, you must not end your paragraph here. Rather, you must analyze or comment on the quote to make explicit its significance for your argument:**

In describing the fear that strikes those who bring complaints against the powerful in Mexico, the journalist Debbie Nathan recounts the attacks on the Mendozas:

[they] return to Juarez and are immediately terrorized by unknown men who torch a family car. One the front seat they leave a burned coin, apparently part of the evidence collected seven years ago when Lorena's body was retrieved. The family goes to the Juarez police station for help. When they arrive, they see the same men who'd burned the car--walking around the office as though they worked there. (Nathan, 179)

Nathan makes explicit the impossibility of justice in a system where corruption and terror are the rule rather than the exception.

[The example assumes that this last sentence fits with the point the author wants to make. I would probably not want to stop here, but rather add several more sentences to mine the passage thoroughly.]

II. Citation

1. Footnotes, properly formatted, still provide the best means to communicate a great deal of bibliographic information with minimal disruption to your prose. That said, they are not the only acceptable way to document your citations. Of all citations, they are probably the easiest to place correctly: **footnotes almost always come at the end of the sentence, even if the quoted material does not, unless you have a very good reason.** The proper place for a footnote is **after the final punctuation** of the sentence, or the quotation, in the case of block-indented passages. **Give full bibliographic data on your first citation of a source,** and use author's name only, or author's name and abbreviated title, for subsequent citations of the same source.

2. For short, non-indented quotes, the citation comes at the end of the sentence, even if the quote itself does not. If you are using parenthetical citations, the citation of author and page number appear in parenthesis, immediately before the final punctuation of your sentence. **Do not put it elsewhere.** If the quotation ends with a comma in the original, drop it unless your own prose requires it. If a quotation comes at the end of one of your sentences, and itself ends with a question or exclamation mark, this mark comes inside the final close-quote, followed by a space, followed by the parenthesis with citation information, followed by a period:

Rosenau exclaims: “what a pity we did not know!” (Rosenau 22).

3. For block-indented quotes the footnote number parenthetical reference comes after the final punctuation of the quote. If you quote a great deal from a single document, you may omit the author if this will not cause confusion.

4. For material cited from the web, attempt to get a “stable URL” at the server or database that provides the information--in general, not our own campus library website, nor a search engine. Give the date consulted or retrieved (do not use the barbaric phrase “date accessed”), and if possible, the date of publication or creation of the document. This last is most important for newspapers.

III. Placement

Quotes should only rarely appear at the beginning of a paragraph, and almost never at the end. If you place it at the beginning, your readers will probably find it abrupt and lacking the preparation that an introductory clause or sentence gives. If you place the quote at the end of the paragraph, you will almost invariably omit the necessary analysis of the quoted passage, without which it will be useless. Furthermore, quotes at the end of paragraphs tend to give the quoted author, rather than you, the last word on the subject. **You must not let quotations usurp your speaking position.**

You must never simply quote something, imagine then that you have made your point, and go on to your next; you must always analyze, comment, or explain the quoted material in order that it may advance your argument. If you do not do this, you essentially waste the quote. If you find you cannot do this, you should drop the quote altogether, or revise your argument. Of course, this does not mean that you should paraphrase what you just quoted. Your use of the quote needs to include analysis, not summary.

Resist the temptation to build a paragraph by stringing together quotes. Paraphrase when necessary (with attribution of course), and always select only the most salient portion of a passage for citation. A shorter quote is often a better quote.

Do not quote when you do not need to do so: for example, when you really only need to say what happens at a given moment in a book, but have no immediate comment on the actual words themselves used to narrate it. In that situation, you might paraphrase, or you might simply use your own words. Never let quotations do your work for you.

Information that you could find in any of a dozen sources does not require attribution, unless you find something especially useful about the actual wording of the information in one particular source.