

HOW TO QUOTE

If you're writing an essay and find a sentence that's written so well written that you simply can't paraphrase it, then you need to quote it "as such, and, in your citation, you must include not only the author – and possibly the year – but also the *page number* from which the quote was taken". You can use either "double" or 'single' quotation marks, but always be consistent.

Your referencing style will dictate how you cite quotations. Here, APA and MLA will be dealt with. For more information on referencing styles, have a look at "**How to reference**" in this series.

With APA, citations *a/ways* include at least the author and publication year, e.g., (Johnson, 1982). With MLA, citations *a/ways* include at least the author, e.g., (Johnson).

If you need to include the page number, for APA style you use:

- ▶ **p.** for a single page number, e.g., (Jones, 2003, p. 8)
- ▶ **pp.** for more than one page number, e.g., (Jones, 2003, pp. 8-10)

For MLA style, you only provide the page number(s) with no preceding letter(s) or comma, e.g., (Jones 8).

There's also another difference you should be aware of. Sometimes, especially in the case of websites, there are *no* pages. If this is the case and you're using APA, you need to indicate the **paragraph number** instead. This may mean that you need to count down the webpage. You then indicate the paragraph(s) as follows:

- ▶ **para.** for a single paragraph, e.g., (Granger, 1996, para. 22)
- ▶ **paras.** for more than one paragraph, e.g., (Granger, 1996, paras. 22-32)

For MLA, unless the paragraphs are numbered, you don't provide this information, i.e., you just provide the author(s) surname(s), e.g., (Granger).

And finally: for some documents, e.g., from the United Nations or legal documents, **articles** are used and numbered in the text. This means that, if you're using MLA you can indicate the article number as you did for the page number, e.g., (UN 6). For APA, you need to indicate that it's an article, which you can do as follows:

- ▶ **art.** for one article, e.g., (UN, 2012, art. 54)
- ▶ **arts.** for more than one article, e.g., (UN, 2012, arts. 54)

Remember: use quotations sparingly. If you use too many, you could get accused of not providing enough of *your own* thought processes and ideas.

■ Quotes within quotes

If there's a quote within a quote, you need to use the set of quotation marks you didn't use previously. In other words:

- ▶ if you used "the double quotation marks when writing a quotation, 'use the single set' for the quote within a quote"
- ▶ if you used 'the single quotation marks when writing a quotation, "use the double set" for the quote within a quote'

■ Block quotations

If your quotation is composed of **40 words or more** (as a general rule), you should place the quotation in a **block quote**:

For a block quotation, use a new line and indent the text using the tab key. You *don't* include quotation marks. Once you've finished the quote, end the sentence with the punctuation as used in the original text (e.g., period, exclamation mark, etc.), and then put the citation in brackets, remembering to also include the page number (or paragraph or article number if using APA) of the quotation, i.e., (author, year, p./para./art.) for APA, or (author, page number) for MLA.

After the block quote is finished, resume your writing as before.

■ A few quotation rules to bear in mind

There are a number of quotation rules that you should bear in mind while writing.

▶ Ending quotations

Don't forget to end the quotation with its quotation mark pair! You may be surprised at how easy it is to do...

▶ Punctuation

Whether you put the punctuation inside or outside the quotation marks depends on what punctuation you're referring to. In general:

- colons, semi-colons and dashes go outside
- commas and periods can vary, but tend to be inside
- question and exclamation marks also vary: if they're part of the quotation, then inside; if not (and they're part of your own sentence), then outside

Whatever you decide, be consistent.

▶ Capitalized and lowercased letters

Capitalize as the original text does. However, there might be a time when you want to change this, for example, you find this quote by the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter:

“The greatest deficit in the food economy is the democratic one.”

You want to integrate it into a sentence. To do this, you simply use square brackets to convert the capitalized “t” in “the” into a lowercase letter, as follows:

De Schutter, in his final diagnosis to the Human Rights Council, expressed the need for an overhaul of the current food systems, explaining that “[t]he greatest deficit in the food economy is the democratic one” (OHCHR, 2014, para. 5).

Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2014). *Democracy and diversity can mend broken food systems – final diagnosis from UN right to food expert*. Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

► **Personal communication**

What's meant here by personal communication is emails, interviews, surveys, etc. Actually, there's no hard rule to follow in regard to citing this type of material. However, the general consensus is as follows:

first name initial and surname (unless confidential), "personal communication", followed by the day, month, year it took place

e.g., (P. Schmidt, personal communication, 5 July, 2015).

Or, if confidential, simply:

(personal communication, 5 July, 2015)

► **Mistakes in the original**

As with direct quotations of any kind, you should always be true to the material, even if the person misspelled a word or used bad grammar. However, if this is the case, you need to signal it as such so that your reader doesn't think that it's *you* making the mistake. You can accomplish this by writing [*sic*] next to the mistake. For example, say a survey participant writes this in a survey and you want to use it in your thesis:

"I don't like the idea of my neighbor growing genetically modyfied corn"

When you quote this, you simply modify it as follows:

"I don't like the idea of my neighbor growing genetically modyfied [*sic*] corn"

If the participant happens to have more than one mistake, then you need to place [*sic*] after each of them, e.g.:

"I perfer [*sic*] GM crops; I feel that they provide me with more securitie [*sic*]"

This doesn't only apply to personal communication: you can also find such mistakes in official reports, published books, websites, etc.

► **Omitting information**

If you want to omit part of a quote because it's not relevant to the point you're trying to make, you can do so by replacing the word(s) with an **ellipsis**, which is the proper term for ... For example:

"Massive strides have been made in improving food security...Yet 776 million people in developing countries remain undernourished – about one person in six" (FAO, 2015, p. 1)

Instead of:

"Massive strides have been made in improving food security. **The proportion of people living in developing countries with average food intakes below 2 200 kcal per day fell from 57 percent in 1964-66 to just 10 percent in 1997-99.** Yet 776 million people in developing countries remain undernourished – about one person in six" (FAO, 2015, p. 1)

Source: Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). (2015). *World agriculture: towards 2015/2030*. Summary report. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

■ Another reason to use quotation marks

Quotation marks can also be used to emphasize a word or phrase. For example, if you're introducing a concept for the first time, like "gender mainstreaming" or "human capital". This issue is dealt with in more detail in "**Basic tips for writing**" in this series.

■ A couple of final points

▶ German to English keyboards

You may have noticed that in German, the first quotation mark is at the top and the final quotation mark sits at the bottom of the text, i.e., like „this“. Be wary of this if you use a German version of Microsoft Word!

▶ Different referencing styles

Different referencing styles use different rules for different circumstances. If you have a formatting issue, check online to find out how your referencing style says you should deal with it. For guidance on APA and MLA styles, check out "**How to reference**" in this series.