When to Use Quotations

When you write an essay or research paper, it's important that your own voice and argument are dominant. In order to ensure this, you should **use quotations sparingly** and paraphrase your sources instead. See the *Summarizing and Paraphrasing* handout for more information.

Try to only use quotations if the original contains technical information that is difficult to paraphrase, or if the wording of the original source is important (e.g. if you're quoting poetry or a personal opinion).

Incorporating Quotations

When you use a quotation, make sure that you introduce it first and explain or paraphrase it afterward.

> e.g. Some people in the industry have expressed concern over Canadian publishers' reliance on foreign companies. Recently, Darren Wershler-Henry, editor of Coach House Books, was quoted as saying: "'Letting an American firm have control over our publishing list just strikes me as a little weird.'" Wershley-Henry and others are worried that the decisions made by American firms may affect the availability and distribution of Canadian titles.

Quotation Marks

Put double quotation marks (" ") around all words that you copy exactly, including special terms used by a particular author.

> e.g. When Trudeau was asked by a reporter how far he would go to suppress the FLQ during the October Crisis, he famously replied, "Just watch me."

> e.g. The anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep used the term "liminal" to describe the transition period between two phases of life.

Indirect Quotations

Single quotation marks are used for a quotation that appears inside another quotation.

> e.g. According to the police report, "The witness heard the tenant shout 'Help me!' at around 11:30pm."

At times, this may result in what looks like a triple quotation mark, with no spaces in between ('").

Sentence-Long Quotations

If you are introducing a quotation that is a full sentence by itself, put a comma before the quotation. Leave the first word capitalized.

> e.g. As Hedican suggests, "The philosophy of cultural relativism can be thought of as an intellectual antidote to ethnocentrism."

Shorter Quotations

Don't put a comma before a shorter quotation or capitalize the first word of the quotation if it fits with the grammar of your own sentence.

> e.g. Reinhard's team was able to prove that the people in this region "had an esoteric knowledge of medicinal plants."

Closing Punctuation

As the example above shows, if a period or comma appears after the quotation, place this punctuation *inside* the quotation. However, if a colon or semi-colon comes at the end of the quotation, this punctuation should appear *outside* the quotation.

> e.g. He swore an oath "to serve and protect": an oath he upheld during his 25 years of service.

If you are writing an academic paper and using in-text citation, make sure that the citation appears *after* the closing quotation mark, *before* the period.

> e.g. Chandler has "elevated detective fiction toward 'serious' literature" (McCann 177).

Omitting Words

Use ellipses to show when you have omitted information. For APA or MLA, use 3 spaced ellipses points, with a space before and after, to show that you have deleted words in the middle of a sentence. For MLA, use 4 spaced points to show deletions that occur over two sentences.

> **Original Quotation:** e.g. "*Nieve penitente*, or penitent snow, are collections of spires that resemble robed monks—or penitents. They are flattened columns of snow wider at the base than at the tip and can range in height from 3 to 20 feet (1 to 6 meters)."

> **Quotation with Omission:** "*Nieve penitente* . . . are flattened columns of snow wider at the base than at the tip and can range in height from 3 to 20 feet (1 to 6 meters)."

When omitting words, be careful not to change the meaning of the original sentence.

Adding Words

Sometimes you need to add words to clarify the meaning of a quotation, or to change the verb tense to match your own sentence. Put square brackets around any words or letters that you add to a quotation.

> e.g. Dell'Amore said that "they [dung beetles] navigate via the Milky Way."