

Working with Quotations

A Cautionary Note Regarding Quotations

Although research and persuasive writing usually require use of credible sources, your job as the author of a paper is to sift through the sources and incorporate the ideas into your own thinking. Never allow the sources (or quotations) to “take over” your paper. Well written papers do not contain quotation after quotation after quotation. The majority of the information from your sources should be paraphrased or summarized, thus allowing you to establish your own voice rather than sounding like your paper was written by committee. Using a direct quotation should be a considered decision. Only quote material that is unusually or exceptionally well said or that uses special, unique terms. A well-chosen quotation can add impact to your paper, but excessive or inappropriately used quotations are detrimental to your message and your grade.

Indirect Quotations

When you find a source that quotes another source, this is an indirect quotation. For indirect quotations, use “qtd. in” to indicate the source.

For example:

Ravitch believes that high schools receive pressure to act as “social service centers, and they don’t do that well” (qtd. in Weisman 259).

This indicates that you found the information in Weisman’s book on page 259. On that page, Weisman quoted Ravitch. The entry on the Works Cited page will be for Weisman’s book.

Two Works by the Same Author

When you do extensive research on a topic, you may want to use several sources from one author who is an authority on that topic. The reader must be able to distinguish which information came from which works by that person; therefore, you must include a shortened title for the work from which you obtained the information.

For example:

In his works, Lightenor argues that computers are not useful tools for young children (“Too Soon” 38). However, he feels that children exposed to computer games early develop better small motor skills (“Hand-Eye Development” 17).