

WORKING WITH QUOTATIONS 1: THE LEAD-IN

To effectively support an argument, a quotation requires three parts: lead-in, citation, and analysis. This handout covers how to introduce a quotation with an effective lead-in. For guidance on citation and analysis, see Working with Quotations handouts 2 and 3.

The **lead-in** prepares your reader for the source material you are about to reproduce. Its primary role is to orient the audience by providing the context necessary to understand the quotation and the way it is being used to support your argument. This context can include:

- *The author's name:* Give the author's full name in your first quotation, with the exception of famous authors—Shakespeare, Freud, Einstein, &c.—whose last name will suffice. After that, use the last name only. Social and natural science papers that include literature reviews are an exception and typically refer to their source authors by last name only.
- *The author's background:* When the author's background is relevant or is not widely known, you may want to include it in your lead-in (e.g. “*Intel co-founder Robert Noyce*”)
- *The quotation's relationship to the surrounding argument:* This can include linking the quotation to the essay's main claim, to the topic sentence of the paragraph, or to a previously cited piece of evidence.

Identify and introduce quotations smoothly, using one of the following methods:

- *Verb and comma* (most common): The object of Twain's ridicule shifts from American con men to the citizens who enable their success when the undertaker declares, “All you've got to do is just be ca'am and stack it up—they'll stand the racket” (353).
- *Introductory phrase:* Though Vonnegut declares that jokes function by “hooking people with little barbless hooks and letting them off again” (*Fates* 185), I would contend that this and most of his other humor operates in a significantly different, even antithetical, way.
- *Subordination using that:* Anthropologist Mary Douglas's contention that “laughter is a unique bodily eruption which is always to be taken as a communication” (86) suggests that a laugh can be interpreted as a text.
- *Introduction and colon:* Charlie Chaplin describes his humor as having a primarily realist effect on its audience: “I make them conscious of the reality of life. ‘You think this is it, don't you?’ I say. ‘Well, it isn't, but this is—see?’ And then they laugh” (qtd. in Eastman 273).
- *Interrupted quotation* (less common): Joking about money has been one way the culture has grappled with its greedy tendencies. “At our worst,” the critic Louis Kronenberger has expounded, “we have made humor the handle of our acquisitiveness, a trick way of getting our foot in the door” (163).

Finally, your quotations should flow smoothly within the syntax of your sentence. Fit quotations into your sentence's grammatical structure by:

- crafting your sentence structure to fit the quotation,
- using only part of the quotation,
- deleting words that impede the grammar and replacing them with ellipses, or
- adding words in square brackets to aid the grammar.

What you're Leading-in to: Quotation vs. Summary

Conventions governing when to **quote** a source and when to **summarize** it vary greatly by discipline:

- *Humanities*: It is conventional to quote both primary and secondary source material. Summary can be permissible when a source's specific wording is not relevant to your argument, but scholars in the humanities tend to favor reproducing the exact language of a source so that the audience can judge whether it has been interpreted fairly.
- *Social Sciences*: It is conventional to quote primary sources and summarize secondary sources. In order to provide the clearest possible picture of their object of study, social scientists tend to quote material from non-numerical primary sources like interviews, observation, and questionnaires. Writing in the social sciences tends to emphasize thorough coverage of a field in a small space. As a result, it privileges summary of secondary sources over direct quotation.
- *Natural Sciences*: It is conventional to summarize secondary sources. Quotation of primary sources is rare in the natural sciences since this material typically takes the form of numerical data. Like the social sciences, writing in the natural sciences tends to be highly condensed, and it is conventional to summarize secondary sources in order to present the current field of research as thoroughly as possible in a small space.

Summaries and paraphrases of source material do not typically require the same kinds of lead-ins used to set up direct quotation.