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Using Direct Quotes: All Those Nit-Picky Details Made Clear

Quotes help you support your ideas. You want to use a *direct quote*, rather than a paraphrase when the author states something so well that you want to use their exact words, and you think those words will clarify an idea in your essay.

Direct quotes are great...but you may be confused by all the little rules about **MLA in-text citation formatting and punctuation**. The purpose of MLA in-text citation, sometimes called a parenthetical reference, is to help readers easily find the sources that correspond to your referenced passage in the Works Cited page at the end of your paper. Some of you may have already begun to do this in high school; you will be required to include correctly formatted quotes and citations towards the end of EWRT 1A and in EWRT 2 or 1B. Here's a guide to help you check your work. Review these tips and common errors, then try it yourself!

Note: The examples in this handout reference an article titled "The Infrastructure of Joy," by Ian Bogost. It appeared in *The Atlantic* on June 27, 2019.
(<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/06/why-joy-better-happiness/592735/>).

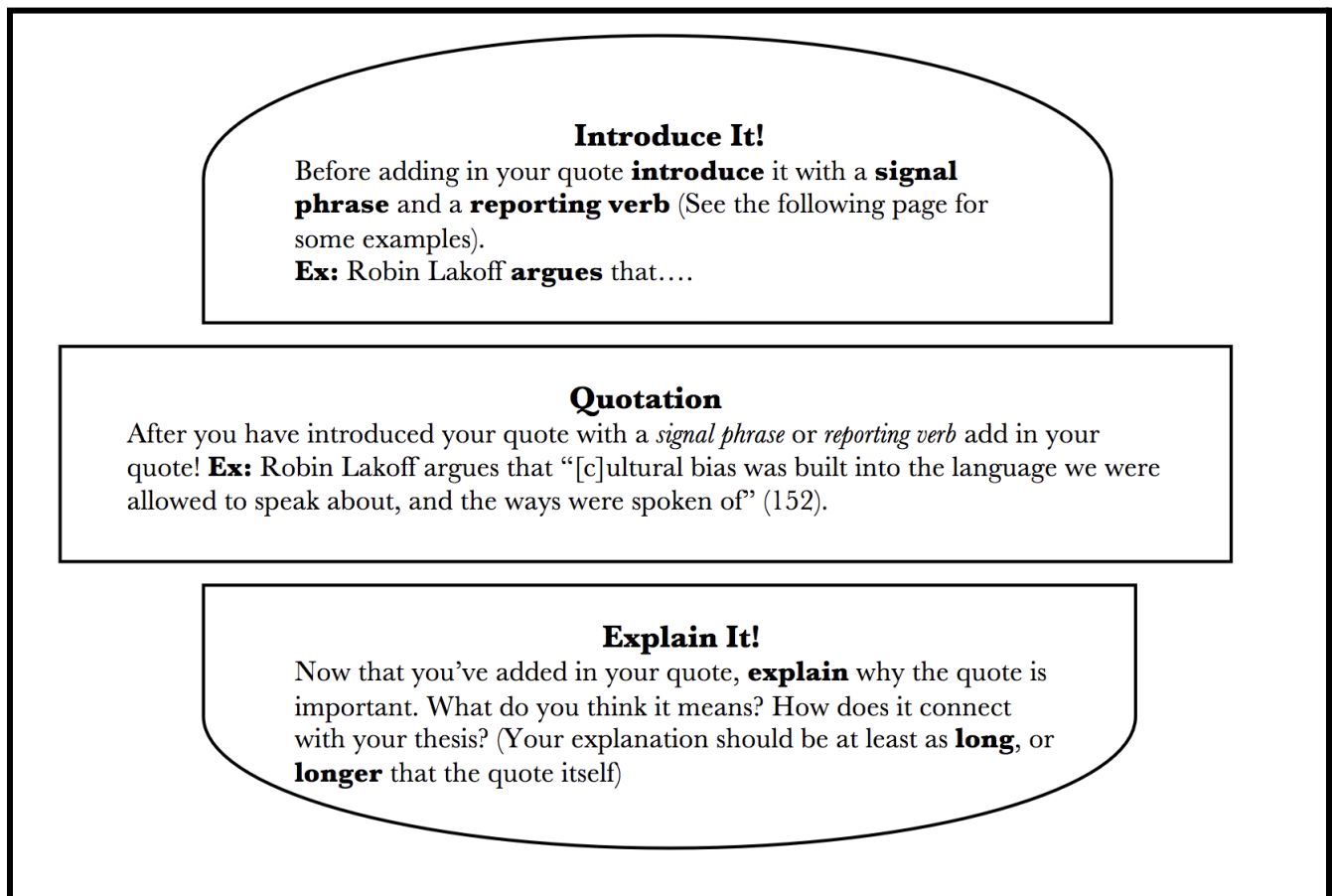
For more information about MLA in-text citation, see Purdue OWL "[In-Text Citations: The Basics](#)." Another good source is <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/quotations/>

Tip #1: Provide a summary or context on the article before using the direct quote.

If you haven't already included it somewhere else in the paper, perhaps in the introduction, you need to provide context/background information on the article/text you are using, otherwise, your reader may not understand the quote. Providing context helps you further develop your paper, and helps your audience move more easily through your ideas. Here's an example of a sentence that explains the main idea of the article.

In “The Infrastructure of Joy” the author Ian Bogost discusses how designer Ingrid Lee brings joy—strong, upbeat yet short-lived feelings—to people in public spaces through design elements like bright colors and bubbly shapes.

Note: To ensure that your reader fully understands how the quote you are using supports your thesis, you must smoothly incorporate the quote into your paragraph; otherwise, your reader may be left unsure of why you used the quote. The “quote sandwich” is a method, similar to PIE, that aids you in effectively adding quotes. See below for further explanation:



Tip #2: You don't need to mention the author's full name the second time you use it—just use their last name.

It is better to use an author's last name or *he/she* instead of mentioning the full name again.

Bogost points out Lee's discovery that, "adding design elements that seem to produce moments of joy—like color and pattern—can make people more productive and hopeful" (1).

Tip #3: Be sure to include a subject and a verb before (or after) the direct quote.

Bogost (*Subject*) points out (*Verb*) Lee's discovery...
In the article, Bogost (*Subject*) claims (*Verb*) that....

Tip #4: Be careful with punctuation.

If you don't include the author's name before the quote, then it goes next to the page number with NO comma. It is tempting to put the period at the end of the quote (after "hopeful"), but the correct format is to put it *after* the page number.

Lee discovered that "adding design elements that seem to produce moments of joy—like color and pattern—can make people more productive and hopeful" (Bogost 1).

Tip #5: Don't put "p." or "page" before the page number.

If the work has no page numbers (i.e. website) simply put the author's last name in parentheses.

Tip #6: Provide variety with the verbs you use. Try some of these:

acknowledges	comments	grants	points out
adds	compares	illustrates	reasons
admits	confirms	implies	response
agrees	declares	insists	refutes
argues	denies	laments	states
believes	disputes	mentions	suggests
contends	emphasizes	notices	thinks
claims	endorses	observes	wonders

FIND THE ERRORS!

Example 1

In “The Infrastructure of Joy”, reports Ingrid Lee’s findings that “people tend to fear they will get tired of bold colors, but actually they’re much more likely to grow weary of drab ones”. (2)

1. What should be the subject of the verb “reports”? (See tip #3) _____
2. What has to be corrected at the end of the sentence? (See tip #4) _____

Example 2

In “The Infrastructure of Joy” by Ian Bogost, it contends we should focus on making the “little moments more important than the big ones because they are happening all around us, all the time” (2)

1. Who said the quote “little moments ...” ? (Hint: notice the subject) _____
2. What goes after the final parenthesis? (See tip #4) _____

Example 3

In Ian Bogost’s article, “The Infrastructure of Joy”, Ian Bogost illustrates that “Joy is tiny but visceral” (p. 1).

1. What is too repetitive and could be edited out? (See tip #2) _____
2. What is wrong with the page number? What can you do to fix it? (See tip #5)

Example 4

In his article, “The Infrastructure of Joy,” Bogost quotes “Being happy is great, but it’s also amorphous and lava-lampy” (1).

1. Is the verb “quote” on the list of possible options? Why not? (See tip #6)

2. Which verb could really describe what Bogost is doing here? _____

Example 5

“To arrive at happiness, Lee suggests, is pursuing it from the bottom up, by finding (or creating) moments of joy,” Bogost presents, emphasizing that focusing on joy in our daily lives will add to our overall happiness, which is more long-term (1).

1. Is it “legal” to put the author and a verb after the quote for a variety?

2. Is the placement of the page number incorrect? _____

APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED

Now that you understand those picky details about formatting direct quotes, look back at a paper you have already done, or one you are working on, and make sure the quote is in the right format. If you don’t have an assignment, practice using a quote from this article.

Did you introduce or lead into the quote with author + title + a little context?

Copy your example here.

Did you include an intriguing quote with the author's last name + page number in the proper format? Copy your example here.