USING QUOTES IN A RESEARCH PAPER

When writing a text that includes sources, you need to quote the sources you are working with. Writers use quotes for several reasons:

• to assert facts
• as a voice that adds authority or color to an assertion being made
• most importantly, to avoid plagiarism.

Below are three different quotation formats and guidelines to follow when using them. The three quotation formats include

• direct quotation
• block quotation
• paraphrase
Direct Quotations
What is a direct quote? A direct quote is an exact, word for word copy of the original source.

For example, “In a paper analyzing primary sources such as literary works, you will use direct quotation extensively to illustrate and support your analysis” (Aaron 257).

This quote comes from the source exactly as the author had written it. A direct quotation usually corresponds exactly to the source's spelling, capitalization and interior punctuation.

Rules for Use
• Direct quotes must use a lead-in or tag phrase. In other words, direct quotes must be attached to your own writing. If you look at the above direct quote, you will notice the phrase “For example,” which is enough to satisfy the lead-in requirement.
• When attributing a quote to an author in your text, the following verbs will prove helpful: notes, argues, observes, writes, emphasizes, says, reports, suggests, claims, and comments.
• Generally speaking, you should cite the author by last name only—as Brand, not Michael Brand or Mr. Brand.
Direct Quotations
Using brackets and ellipses in direct quotation

Sometimes you may have to alter the direct quotation in order:
• to clarify any unclear pronoun usage (such as “he” or “she”—who are “they”?)
• to match the grammar of your lead-in sentence
• to eliminate unnecessary information

To change the grammar, wording, and to eliminate superfluous information, use what is called ellipses (three periods, …) to indicate missing material, and brackets [ ] to indicate changed or added material.

It is academically dishonest to alter the meaning of a sentence to match your argument using these methods. Use brackets and ellipses to alter form without misrepresenting the original quotation’s content.

When using direct quotations, consider the following example:

Shapiro implies blame when he says, “the issue is a complex one, and [Mapplethorpe] is the best example of...the abuse of civil liberties” (199).

In the previous example, the bracketed information replaces the otherwise unclear pronoun “he” in the original quote and irrelevant material is replaced by the ellipses. Note that the omission of information still provides a sentence that is grammatically correct.
Block Quotations
A block quote is similar to a direct quote except that it is *four or more lines in length*. When a quote becomes four or more lines in length in *your* essay, the quote should be set off from your text (see the example below). MLA conventions state that:

- the block quote should be double-spaced and indented ten spaces from the margin (one extra tab past regular paragraph indent)
- the period that is usually placed after the parentheses is omitted
- *do not* use quotation marks to set them off from your text since the indentation signifies to your reader that the quoted material is not your own.

It is important to understand that block quotes *should not* be used to pad papers for length. Again, misusing block quotes will detract from your credibility as a writer.
**Block Quotations**

When using block quotations, use the following example as a model.

The trickster figure, while crucial to Native American mythos, also surfaces in African-American mythology. In explaining folkloric representations of the devil, Hurston emphasizes that:

> [h]e is not the terror that he is in European folklore. Rather, he is a powerful trickster who often competes successfully with God. There is a strong suspicion that the devil is an extension of the story makers, while God is the supposedly impregnable symbolic representation of their white masters. (306)

In this statement, Hurston suggests that African-American storytellers identify strongly with the trickster figure. It is this identification that helped keep the idea of pride and rebellion alive during the hardships of slavery.
Summary and Paraphrase
Summary and paraphrase are very similar methods that can be used to incorporate an author’s ideas into your own text. Both paraphrase and summary restate someone else’s ideas using your own words. Someone else’s ideas should not to be confused with your own. Follow these simple rules:

- Both methods attribute the ideas to the author in the first sentence
- After the author’s ideas have been summarized or paraphrased, page numbers are included

Including the author’s name in the first sentence, followed by a summary or paraphrase, and ending with the page numbers from which the ideas can be found in the original source indicate to the reader that the ideas in-between are not your own.

This may sound complicated but the idea is simple.
Robertson argues that Elizabeth I is an unrecognized military genius. Although she is often portrayed herself as the queen-mother figure, she was also viewed as the king. This is accentuated by her appearance at the defeat of the Spanish Armada, when she dressed in completely masculine clothing (133-4). Elizabeth I’s cross-dressing signifies the blurring of male and female boundaries as the position as Queen of England required. Here we see that gender roles remain performative rather than biologically determined.

In the above example, the author, Robertson, is mentioned in the first sentence. The page numbers that follow the summary let the reader know when Robertson’s ideas stop and where your ideas begin. Your reader will then know that the information contained between the author’s name and the page numbers are not your own. Note that a properly written paraphrase or summary does not need quotation marks.