How to Use Quotes in Your Paper

Quotes provide important evidence for your paper. However, quotes need to be balanced with your own introduction and analysis. The point of the paper is what you write; the quote supports your argument.

Three Rules of Quoting:

1. Always embed the quote in a sentence of your own that introduces the quote to the reader.

   DON’T: Make a quote its own sentence. For example:
   
   *Honesty is one of the great American ideals. “There is no quality more important to mankind than honesty” (Lincoln 13).*
   
   DO: Make the quote part of your sentence. For example:
   
   *Honesty is one of the great American ideals. As Abraham Lincoln wrote, “There is no quality more important to mankind than honesty” (13).*

   If necessary, change the tense in your quote to match that of your paper. Use brackets to indicate that you changed the tense. For example, in this quote the author changed the past tense “felt” to present tense “feels” to fit with her present tense literary analysis paper.

   *In the end of the novel, Marie confronts her loss and “[feels] a tide of emotion rushing through her” (Holman 230).*

2. Always include your own original analysis after a quote.

   DON’T: End your paragraph or your discussion of the topic with a quote. For example:

   *At the end of the novel, Marie confronts the loss of her family and culture and “[feels] a tide of emotion rushing through her” (Holman 230). [END PARAGRAPH]*

   DO: Provide at least 1 (and preferably 2 or 3) sentences of analysis after a quote, discussing the meaning of the quote and why it is important to the main point of your paragraph/paper. For example:

   *At the end of the novel, Marie confronts the loss of her family and culture and “[feels] a tide of emotion rushing through her” (Holman 230). This demonstrates Marie’s shift from denial of the changes she has endured to acceptance of her new experiences and her resulting emotions. Holman uses the symbol of the sea to…*

3. Only directly quote material that is important to have in the other person’s words. Fill in the context around the quote in your own words.

   DON’T: Directly quote an entire passage when much of it is unimportant to have in the author’s words. For example:

   *Pollan writes, “Another guideline to healthy eating is to avoid being tricked by health claims. Real, whole foods, such as fruits and vegetables, won’t have flashy health slogans because they have no package to speak for them.”*

   DO: Paraphrase around your quote, directly quoting only the most important parts. Also use ellipses to cut out less important parts of quotes. For example,
Pollan warns consumers not to be “tricked by health claims” because “real, whole foods...have no package to speak for them” (19).