

Handout Topic: Using Research Effectively

In many (if not most) university courses, using research effectively and accurately is a required skill. But integrating direct quotations and paraphrasing other research into your own writing should help support your own conclusions, not overwhelm or undermine them.

The type of essay will always dictate the quantity and format of the research being cited. Writing about literature and other primary sources will require many direct quotations, whereas writing in the social sciences will use more paraphrasing (i.e. indirect references). Direct quotations, especially, should always be reduced to their most essential part, unless the exact wording of the original is of interest. Both indirect references (paraphrasing) and direct quotations require proper citations (probably APA, MLA, or Chicago style).

Introducing quotations

There are two possibilities for punctuating before a quotation is introduced: a comma or a colon. Sometimes, no punctuation is required before using a quotation, provided the quotation has been integrated grammatically into the sentence. A comma is used to introduce a quotation if the word preceding the quote is a verb like *said*, *wrote*, *explained*, etc. When a complete sentence is used to introduce a quotation, a colon is used before the quotation. The examples below use the same quotation from Julia Cameron's *The Right to Write* to illustrate these three methods of incorporating quotations into your own writing.

e.g. As Cameron explains, “Writing is medicine. It is an appropriate antidote to injury” (31).

e.g. In *The Right to Write*, Cameron describes the healing powers of writing: “Writing is medicine. It is an appropriate antidote to injury” (31).

e.g. Later in the same book, Cameron remarks that writing “is an appropriate antidote to injury” (31).

Block quotations

Longer quotations (i.e. four lines or more) that are being incorporated into your own writing are called block quotations and are formatted differently than regular quotations. In fact, block quotations do not use quotation marks at all. Instead, the borrowed text should be indented ten spaces from the left margin (and spaced again if reproducing indentation). When quoting poetry, be sure to reproduce all other formatting as closely as possible. No other changes (in spacing, font size, etc.) are required.

e.g.

Julia Cameron has written several books about writing and the creative process. She is also a playwright, songwriter, and poet. In *The Right to Write*, Cameron describes the healing powers of writing:

Writing is medicine. It is an appropriate antidote to injury. It is an appropriate companion for any difficult change. Because writing is a practice of observation as much as intervention, we can become curious as much as frightened in the face of change.

Writing about the change, we can help it along, lean into it, cooperate. Writing allows us to rewrite our lives. (31)

In a later chapter, Cameron also suggests a link between writing and music.

The above example shows a prose block quote, including extra indentation at the beginning of the quote to indicate that the quote started a new paragraph in the original text. Notice also how the citation for a block quote appears *after* the end punctuation.

Connecting research to the thesis

The evidence presented in an essay should always serve a purpose, namely, to support the essay's thesis or purpose. Any paraphrasing or quotations that appear in an essay should always be carefully explained, evaluated, or otherwise interpreted for the audience: never assume that the research included in the essay will speak for itself. Sometimes, it may be advisable to include the author's name, the name of the work from which the quotation is borrowed, or both, if it helps weave the quote into your own text.

e.g. In *The Right to Write*, Julia Cameron describes the healing powers of writing: "Writing is medicine. It is an appropriate antidote to injury" (31).

