Using Direct Quotations - A Brief Summary

Specific examples and references from literature are necessary to validate and clarify the ideas, opinions and observations you make in your essays. When using quotations from a literary work in your writing, these guidelines should be followed. **\*\*For a more complete set of guidelines, ask your teacher or consult a writer’s guidebook or website.** Note: when completing an assignment of say 500 words, quoted material doesn’t count as your writing.

**1**. Never place quoted material into a paragraph ‘naked’ (on its own). It should always be introduced by and be part of a sentence in the paragraph.

*Wrong: Paul is a conceited character. "I'm one of the best looking people here."*

*Right: Paul reveals his conceit when he boasts "I'm one of the best looking people here."*

**2.** Do not quote more than you need to support your point. Use only the word or phrase that you need, then work it into the flow of your sentences.

*Weak: The setting helps to establish the gloomy atmosphere: "Jason and Sean slowly crept into a dark, dingy, and icy cellar."*

*Better: The setting, a "dark, dingy, and icy cellar," helps to establish a gloomy atmosphere.*

**3.** Quote exactly.

a. If you need to alter material within a quotation to suit the language of your sentence, indicate the alteration with square brackets.

*Paul says that he "want[s] to get even."*

*Sara sees the ball as a “greasy leather orb [that] flew like a dull bird. . .”*

b. If you wish to omit some non-essential words from the quotation, indicate the omission with ellipses.

*Manon declared that she was "tired . . . and very hungry."*

(Actual speech: "Manon said that she was tired and-glancing toward the table- very hungry.")

Note: if the omission is at the end of a sentence, indicate it with four periods; the final one is for the period at the end of the sentence.

**4.** If you are using a prose passage exceeding two sentences, or poetry quotations that exceed two lines, they should be ‘blocked’ off. Introduce it as usual with a sentence (or more), and end your sentence with a colon(:). Write the long quotation double-indented, and single spaced.

\*\* Quotation marks are not used in this case.

eg:

The opening paragraph plunges the reader into a dark and sinister world:

*A black cat creeping slowly through the shadows paused momentarily, as if it was suddenly*

*unsure of itself. Behind it lurked two tall, bent-over figures, one of them wearing a long, jet*

*black raincoat. All seemed caught in the giant shadow of an old, gnarled tree.*

**This is the l’ong quotation rule’:**

**double indented both sides + single spaced!!**

double indent left margin

usual left indent

usual left margin

page boundary