Embedding Quotations

Using quotations is important in the writing process because they add strong evidence when used appropriately. However, embedding quotations effectively into sentences is just as important as finding the correct quotations to use. Correctly embedded quotations move the reader from the quoted text back into the paragraph smoothly.

Signal Phrases

Signal phrases introduce the article a quotation is from, the person who said the quotation, or both. They are key for embedding quotations. The signal phrases used in the examples of this handout are written in bold print.

Some Signal Phrases to Use		
according to	claims	points out
discusses	proposes	notes
states	writes	demonstrates
argues	explains	says

Strategies for Embedding Quotations

There are three strategies you can use to embed quotations: set off quotations, build in quotations, or introduce quotations with a colon.

Set off Quotations

Set-off quotations are set off from the sentence with a comma. Capitalize the first word of the quote. Notice the signal phrases (in bold print) used in the following examples.

Examples of Setting off Quotations
- As Jane Smith **explains**, "A duck's quack doesn't echo."   "Cheese is the most stolen food in the world," **according to** Jane Smith.   - In the article, Jane Smith **writes**, "Snails can sleep for three years without eating."   "Dolphins," as Jane Smith **notes**, "have highly developed emotion centers in their brains."

Build in Quotations

Unlike set-off quotations, built-in quotations are built seamlessly in to a sentence. They are not set off with commas and usually use the word "that" along with a signal phrase. Do not capitalize the first word of these quotes.

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Examples of Building In Quotations

- In the interest of animal sleeping habits, Jane Smith **proposes** that "dolphins sleep with one eye open."
- Jane Smith **points out**, in her article about the sun, that "only 55% of all Americans know that the sun is a star."

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Introduce Quotations with a Colon

For this strategy, the signal is a *complete sentence* that goes before the colon. This sentence provides some information about the quotation to introduce it. The quotation follows the colon, and the first word in the quotation is capitalized.

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Examples of Introducing Quotes with a Colon

- In her book about pets, Jane Smith **discusses** the benefits of owning a dog: "Dog owners are less likely to suffer from depression and have lower levels of stress than people who do not own dogs."
- Jane Smith **argues** that there are many good reasons for consuming dark chocolate: "Dark chocolate contains antioxidants, lowers blood pressure, and is high in vitamins and minerals."

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Common Errors in Embedding Quotations

When embedding quotations, be sure to avoid the following common errors.

Ambiguous Pronouns

Make sure the name of the person who said the quote is not in an introductory phrase, but part of the subject. The subject of the sentence should use the name of the person who said the quote.

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Incorrect: In Jane Smith's book about pets, *she* claims that "people who own dogs have lower levels of stress."
Correct: In her book about pets, *Jane Smith* claims that "people who own dogs have lower levels of stress."

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Floating Quotations

Embedding quotations is important because the reader can follow the paragraph more easily. This means that there should be no sentences composed entirely of a quotation, or the reader may find it difficult to connect the quotation to the point one wishes to make in the paragraph.

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Incorrect: Jane Smith states that there are many good reasons to eat dark chocolate. "Dark chocolate contains many antioxidants."
Correct: Jane Smith states that there are many good reasons to eat dark chocolate, including that "dark chocolate contains many antioxidants."
Correct: Jane Smith states that eating dark chocolate is good for one's health. For instance, "Dark chocolate contains many antioxidants."

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Activity

Embed the following quotations using the name Jane Smith and any of the three techniques for embedding quotations mentioned in this handout. Try using different signal phrases for each one.

1. "The Grammy Awards were created to fight the new wave of rock music."

2. "The Mars rover landed in August 2012 and is there to discover whether Mars is suitable for life."

3. "People should try to exercise for at least thirty minutes every day."

Answer Key for Activity

Note that answers may vary.

1. Jane Smith **claims** that "the Grammy Awards were created to fight the new wave of rock music."

2. **According to** Jane Smith, "The Mars rover landed in August 2012 and is there to discover whether Mars is suitable for life."

3. Jane Smith **asserts** that people should exercise often: "People should try to exercise for at least thirty minutes every day."

References

Harris, Robert A. *Using Sources Effectively*. 3rd ed. Glendale: Pyrczak Publishing, 2011. 41-54.

Print.