

Instant Workshops

Avoiding Plagiarism with Direct Quotes

This workshop explains how to use direct quotes to avoid plagiarism.

Transcript

Avoiding plagiarism with direct quotes. In this workshop, I'll explain direct quotes and how to use them in your academic work. This is part of a series on avoiding plagiarism.

In a previous workshop, I defined plagiarism as presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own. I mentioned that you need to cite the work of others in your own work to avoid plagiarism, and that citing consists of an in-text citation and a bibliographic reference. Different citation styles provide instructions on how to do this.

Now, occasionally, when you are working on an assignment, you may want to include the original words of another author or work. Maybe you're defining a term, or you want to analyze something someone else has said, or someone has expressed something in such a great way that you really want to keep the original wording. Using the original words is using a direct quote.

Now, you need to be selective in your use of direct quotes. Some disciplines discourage direct quotes unless necessary, while others are more comfortable with direct quotes throughout a work. You need to learn what the expectations are for the subjects you're studying. Still, you want to make sure the main voice in your work is your own, and that you are not just stitching together a series of direct quotes in your work.

Now, when you've determined that you want to use a direct quote, it's important to present the quote word-for-word exactly as it is in the original, even if there are spelling or grammar errors! Citation styles explain how to indicate when an error is someone else's and not your own. Let's take an example from my assignment on the connection between happiness and social action, in which I am using an article entitled *Do happy people care about society's problems?* from the *Journal of Positive Psychology*.

The quote I want to use is from page 474, "Are happy people less likely to be involved in social, political, and environmental action? Contrary to this Pollyanna hypothesis, we found evidence across three studies and various social issues that happiness predicts more, not less, social action." First, there are no errors in this quote, so I don't need to concern myself with that. I make sure I accurately reproduce the quote.

Now, each citation style has rules for making small changes to direct quotes when needed to integrate with your own writing, such as if you need to change the capitalization of the first letter, remove a few extra words, or emphasize a word or phrase in the quote. For example, say I'm concerned that my readers won't understand the reference to Pollyanna. If I am using APA Style as my citation style, for example, I can

remove the first part of the second sentence, and replace it with an ellipsis, three dots to show that part of the quote has been removed. However, the reference to Pollyanna is the whole reason I wanted to keep this as a direct quote, so I'll put the phrase I took out back in.

When you present a short quote, place the quote inside quotation marks, followed by an in-text citation. What's considered "short" depends on your citation style. It can be limited by number of words or by number of lines on the page.

When you present a longer quote, and again "longer" will be defined by your citation style, present it as a block quote. This means starting a new line in your document before adding the quote, indenting the whole paragraph the quote is in, and then again, following the quote with an in-text citation. After the block quote has been added, start a new line, remove the extra indentation, and keep writing.

If I wanted my direct quote to be longer, by including the next sentence from the original article, my direct quote would be long enough, according to APA Style, to present as a block quote.

Remember that all in-text citations need a matching bibliographic reference in the location required by your citation style, whether it's in a footnote at the bottom of the page or at the very end of your document.

When reviewing your work, a question you can ask yourself is, "Why have I included this as a direct quote?" Unless there is something important about the original words, you might consider paraphrasing instead, especially if you have many direct quotes in your work.

In a previous video on plagiarism, I mentioned that citing and avoiding plagiarism can sometimes be confusing, that it's a skill you develop with practice, and that there may be people available to help you. If you need more help, contact your institution's writing centre, tutoring service, or library.

Instructions

To use direct quotes from other authors without plagiarizing:

1. Use **direct quotes** when it is important to present authors' original words.

Be careful not to overuse direct quotes. Most of the writing in an assignment should be in your words.

2. Reproduce direct quotes word-for-word exactly as they are presented in the original work.

Each **citation style** has rules for making minor changes to direct quotes when needed, such as changing the capitalization of the first letter, removing unnecessary words, or emphasizing a word or phrase.

3. For shorter quotes, place the direct quote inside **quotation marks** followed by the **in-text citation**.
4. For longer quotes, present the direct quote as a **block quote**, which is to say its own full-indented paragraph, follow by the in-text citation.

Specific details for direct quotes depend on the citation style you are using. Find the style guide for your citation style for more information.

Review

Task for Learning

Locate two academic journal articles. Take note of how each article cites other works with direct quotes.

Review Question

When is it appropriate to use a direct quote?

- a) When presenting a definition
- b) When analyzing another author's specific words
- c) When another author's words are particularly memorable or effective
- d) Any of the above

The correct answer is on the next page.

Review Question Answer

The correct answer is d) Any of the above.