

"THEY SAY I SAY"

*The Moves That Matter
in Academic Writing*

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stand them and therefore have trouble explaining what they j mean.

But the main problem with quotation arises when writers assume that quotations speak for themselves. Because the meaning of a quotation is obvious to them, many writers assume that this meaning will also be obvious to their readers, when often it is not. Writers who make this mistake think that their job is done when they've chosen a quotation and inserted it into their text. They draft an essay, slap in a few quotations, and whammo, they're done.

Such writers fail to see that quoting means more than simply enclosing what "they say" in quotation marks. In a way, quotations are orphans: words that have been taken from their original contexts and that need to be integrated into their new textual surroundings. This chapter offers two key ways to produce this sort of integration: (1) by choosing quotations wisely, with an eye to how well they support a particular part of your text, and (2) by surrounding every major quotation with a frame explaining whose words they are, what the quotation means, and how the quotation relates to your text. The point we want to emphasize is that quoting what "they say" must always be connected with what *you* say.

QUOTE RELEVANT PASSAGES

Before you can select appropriate quotations, you need to have a sense of what you want to do with them—that is, how they will support your text at the particular point where you insert them. Be careful not to select quotations just for the sake of demonstrating that you've read the author's work; you need to make sure they are relevant to your work.

However, finding relevant quotations is not always easy. In fact, sometimes quotations that were initially relevant to your overall argument, or to a key point in it, become less so as your text changes during the process of writing and revising. Given the evolving and messy nature of writing, you may sometimes think that you've found the perfect quotation to support your argument, only to discover later on, as your text develops, that your focus has changed and the quotation no longer works. It can be somewhat misleading, then, to speak of finding your thesis and finding relevant quotations as two separate steps, one coming after the other. When you're deeply engaged in the writing and revising process, there is usually a great deal of back-and-forth between your argument and any quotations you select.

FRAME EVERY QUOTATION

Finding relevant quotations is only part of your job; you also need to present them in a way that makes their relevance and meaning clear to your readers. Since quotations do not speak for themselves, you need to build a frame around them in which you do that speaking for them.

Quotations that are inserted into a text without such a frame are sometimes called "dangling" quotations for the way they're left dangling without any explanation. One graduate teaching assistant we work with, Steve Benton, calls these "hit-and-run" quotations, likening them to car accidents in which the driver speeds away and avoids taking responsibility for the dent in your fender or the smashed taillights as in Figure 4.

On the following page is a typical hit-and-run quotation by a writer responding to an essay by the feminist philosopher Susan Bordo (reprinted on pp. 149-61).

DON'T BE A HIT-AND-RUN QUOTER.

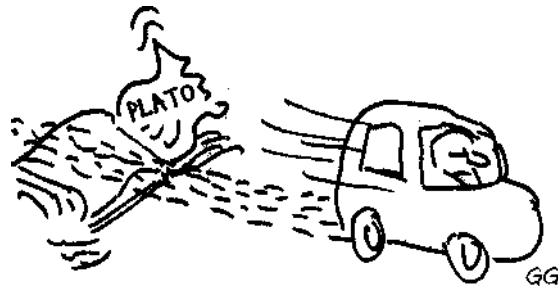


FIGURE 4

Susan Bordo writes about women and dieting. "Fiji is just one example. Until television was introduced in 1995, the islands had no reported cases of eating disorders. In 1998, three years after programs from the United States and Britain began broadcasting there, 62 percent of the girls surveyed reported dieting."

I think Bordo is right. Another point Bordo makes is that. . . .

This writer fails to introduce the quotation adequately or explain why he finds it worth quoting. Besides neglecting to say who Bordo is or even that the quoted words are hers, the writer does not explain how her words connect with anything he is saying. He simply drops the quotation in his haste to zoom on to another point.

To adequately frame a quotation, you need to insert it into what we like to call a "quotation sandwich," with the statement introducing it serving as the top slice of bread and the explanation following it serving as the bottom slice. The introductory or lead-in claims should explain who is speaking and

set up what the quotation says; the follow-up statements should explain why you consider the quotation to be important and what you take it to say.

TEMPLATES FOR INTRODUCING QUOTATIONS

- X states, "....."
- As the prominent philosopher X puts it, "....."
- According to X, "....."
- X himself writes, "....."
- In her book,....., X maintains that "....."
- Writing in the journal *Commentary*, X complains that "....."
- In X's view, "....."
- X agrees when she writes, "....."
- X disagrees when he writes, "....."
- X complicates matters further when she writes, "....."

When adding such introductory phrases, be sure to use language that accurately reflects the spirit of the quoted passage. It is quite serviceable to write "Bordo states" or "asserts" in introducing the quotation about Fiji. But given the fact that Bordo is clearly alarmed by the effect of the extension of the media's reach to Fiji, it is far more accurate to use language that reflects her alarm: "Bordo is alarmed that" or "is disturbed by" or "complains." (See Chapter 2 for a list of verbs for introducing what others say.)

TEMPLATES FOR EXPLAINING QUOTATIONS

- Basically, X is saying _____: — .
- In other words, X believes
- In making this comment, X argues that
- X is insisting that _____
- »• X's point is that _____
- * The essence of X's argument is that _____.

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We suggest getting in the habit of following every major quotation with explanatory sentences structured by templates like these. Consider, for example, how the passage on Bordo might be revised using some of these moves.

The feminist philosopher Susan Bordo deplores the hold that the Western obsession with dieting has on women. Her basic argument is that increasing numbers of women across the globe are being led to see themselves as fat and in need of a diet. Citing the island of Fiji as a case in point, Bordo notes that "until television was introduced in 1995, the islands had no reported cases of eating disorders. In 1998, three years after programs from the United States and Britain began broadcasting there, 62 percent of the girls surveyed reported dieting" (149-50). Bordo's point is that the West's obsession with dieting is spreading even to remote places across the globe. Ultimately, Bordo complains, the culture of dieting will find you, regardless of where you live.

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Bordo's observations ring true to me because a friend of mine from a remote area in China speaks of the cult of dieting among young women there. . . .

This framing of the quotation not only helps to better integrate Bordo's words into the writer's text, but also serves to demonstrate the writer's interpretation of what Bordo is saying. While "the feminist philosopher" and "Bordo notes" provide basic information that readers need to know, the sentences that follow the quotation build a bridge between Bordo's words and those of the writer. Just as important, these sentences explain what Bordo is saying in the writer's own words—and thereby make clear that the quotation is being used purposefully to set up the writer's own argument and has not been stuck in just for padding or merely to have a citation.

BLEND THE AUTHOR'S WORDS WITH YOUR OWN

The above framing material works well because it accurately represents Bordo's words while at the same time giving those words the writer's own spin. Instead of simply repeating Bordo word for word, the follow-up sentences echo just enough of her text while still moving the discussion in the writer's own direction.

Notice how the passage refers several times to the key concept of dieting, and how it echoes Bordo's references to "television" and to U.S. and British "broadcasting" by referring to "culture," which is further specified as that of "the West."

Despite some repetition, this passage avoids merely restating what Bordo says. Her reference to 62 percent of Fijian girls dieting is no longer an inert statistic (as it was in the flawed passage presented earlier), but a quantitative example! of how "the West's obsession with dieting is spreading . . . across the globe." In effect, the framing creates a kind of hybrid text, a mix of Bordo's words and those of the writer.

But is it possible to overexplain a quotation? And how do you know when you've explained a quotation thoroughly enough? After all, not all quotations require the same amount of explanatory framing, and there are no hard-and-fast rules for knowing how much explanation any quotation needs. As a general rule, the most explanatory framing is needed for quotations that may be hard for readers to process: quotations that are long and complex, that are filled with details or jargon, or that contain hidden complexities.

And yet, though the particular situation usually dictates when and how much to explain a quotation, we will still offer one piece of advice: when in doubt, go for it. It is better to risk being overly explicit about what you take a quotation to mean than to leave the quotation dangling and your readers in doubt. Indeed, we encourage you to provide such explanatory framing even when writing to an audience that you know to be familiar with the author being quoted and able to interpret your quotations on their own. Even in such cases readers need to see how *you* interpret the quotation, since words—especially those of controversial figures—can be interpreted in various ways and used to support different, sometimes opposing, agendas. Your readers need to see what you make of the material you've quoted, if only to be sure that your reading of the material and theirs is on the same page.

How NOT TO INTRODUCE QUOTATIONS

We want to conclude this chapter by surveying some ways *not* to introduce quotations. Although some writers do so, you should not introduce quotations by saying something like "X asserts an idea that" or "A quote by X says." Introductory^

phrases like these are both redundant and misleading. In the first example, you could write either "X asserts that" or "X's idea is that," rather than redundantly combining the two. The second example misleads readers, since it is the writer who is doing the quoting, not X (as "a quote by X" implies).

The templates in this book will help you avoid such mistakes. And once you have mastered such templates you probably won't even have to think about them—and will be free to focus on the important, challenging ideas that the templates frame.

Exercises

1. Find a text that quotes someone's exact words as evidence of something that "they say." How has the writer integrated the quotation into his or her own text? How has he or she introduced it, and what if anything has the writer said to explain it and tie it to his or her own text? Based on what you've read in this chapter, are there any changes you would suggest?
2. Look at an essay or a report that you have written for one of your classes. Have you quoted any sources? If so, how have you integrated the quotation into your own text? How have you introduced it? Explained what it means? Indicated how it relates to *your* text? If you haven't done all these things, revise your text to do so, perhaps using the Templates for Introducing Quotations (p. 43) and Explaining Quotations (p. 44). If you've not written anything with quotations, try revising some academic text you've written to do so.

INDEX OF TEMPLATES

INTRODUCING WHAT "THEY SAY" (p. 21)

- A number of sociologists have recently suggested that X's work has several fundamental problems.
- >• It has become common today to dismiss X's contribution to the field of sociology.
- In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of Dr. X for

INTRODUCING "STANDARD VIEWS" (p. 22)

- >• Americans today tend to believe that _____
- > Conventional wisdom has it that
- Common sense seems to dictate that
- The standard way of thinking about topic X has it that .
- > It is often said that
- My whole life I have heard it said that
- > You would think that
- Many people assumed that

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**MAKING WHAT "THEY SAY"
SOMETHING YOU SAY** (pp. 22-23)

- * I've always believed that.....
- When I was a child, I used to think that
- Although I should know better by now, I cannot help thinking that
- At the same time that I believe....., I also believe

**INTRODUCING SOMETHING
IMPLIED OR ASSUMED** (p. 23)

- * Although none of them have ever said so directly, my teachers have often given me the impression that.....
- One implication of X's treatment of is that
- Although X does not say so directly, she apparently assumes that
- While they rarely admit as much, often take for granted that.....

INTRODUCING AN ONGOING DEBATE (p. 24)

- In discussions of X, one controversial issue has been On the one hand,..... argues On the other hand, contends Others even maintain My own view is.....

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- * When it comes to the topic of ^,....., most of us will readily agree that....., Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of..... Whereas some are convinced that ^,..... others maintain that.....
- » In conclusion, then, as I suggested earlier, defenders of..... can't have it both ways. Their assertion that..... is contradicted by their claim that

CAPTURING AUTHORIAL ACTION

- X acknowledges that.....
- X agrees that.....
- X argues that
- X believes that.....
- X denies/does not deny that.....
- X claims that.....
- X complains that.....
- X concedes that.....
- X demonstrates that
- X deplores the tendency to.....
- X celebrates the fact that
- X emphasizes that.....

INDEX OF TEMPLATES

- X insists that _____.
- X observes that _____.
- X questions whether _____.
- X refutes the claim that _____.
- X reminds us that _____.
- X reports that _____.
- X suggests that _____.
- X urges us to _____.

INTRODUCING QUOTATIONS (p. 43)

- * X states, "_____."
- As the prominent philosopher X puts it, "_____."
- According to X, "_____."
- X himself writes, "_____."
- In her book _____, X maintains that "_____."
- Writing in the journal *Commentary*, X complains that "_____."
- In X's view, "_____."
- X agrees when she writes, "_____."
- X disagrees when he writes, "_____."
- X complicates matters further when he writes, "_____."

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EXPLAINING QUOTATIONS (p. 44)

- Basically, X is saying _____.
- * In other words, X believes _____.
- In making this comment, X argues that _____.
- X is insisting that _____.
- X's point is that _____.
- The essence of X's argument is that _____.

DISAGREEING, WITH REASONS (p. 55)

- * I think X is mistaken because she overlooks _____.
- X's claim that _____ rests upon the questionable assumption that _____.
- I disagree with X's view that _____ because, as recent research has shown, _____.
- X contradicts herself/can't have it both ways. On the one hand, she argues _____ But on the other hand, she also says _____.
- By focusing on _____, X overlooks the deeper problem of _____.
- * X claims _____, but we don't need him to tell us that. Anyone familiar with _____ has long known that _____.

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AGREEING—WITH A DIFFERENCE (p. 57)

- I agree that _____ because my experience _____ confirms it.
- X surely is right about _____, because, as she may not be aware, recent studies have shown that _____
- X's theory of _____, is extremely useful because it sheds insight on the difficult problem of _____
- I agree that _____, a point that needs emphasizing since so many people believe _____
- Those unfamiliar with this school of thought may be interested to know that it basically boils down to _____
- If group X is right that _____, as I think they are, then we need to reassess the popular assumption that _____

**AGREEING AND DISAGREEING
SIMULTANEOUSLY** (pp. 59-61J)

- Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that _____
- * Although I disagree with much that X says, I fully endorse his final conclusion that _____
- Though I concede that _____, I still insist that _____
- Whereas X provides ample evidence that _____, Y and Z's research on _____ and _____ convinces me that _____ instead.

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- > X is right that _____, but she seems on more dubious ground when she claims that _____
 - While X is probably wrong when she claims that _____, she is right that _____
 - I'm of two minds about X's claim that _____. On the one hand, I agree that _____. On the other hand, I'm not sure if _____
- My feelings on the issue are mixed. I do support X's position that _____, but I find Y's argument about _____ and Z's research on _____ to be equally persuasive.

SIGNALING WHO IS SAYING WHAT (p. 6j)

- * X argues _____
- According to both X and Y, _____
- Politicians _____, X argues, should _____
- Most athletes will tell you that _____
- My own view, however, is that _____
- I agree, as X may not realize, that _____
- But _____ are real and, arguably, the most significant factor in _____
- But X is wrong that _____
- However, it is simply not true that _____
- Indeed, it is highly likely that _____

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- But the view that.....does not fit all the facts.
- X is right that
- X is wrong that
- X is both right and wrong that
- Yet a sober analysis of the matter reveals
- Nevertheless, new research shows
- Anyone familiar with_____should see that

EMBEDDING VOICE MARKERS (pp. 70-71J)

- X overlooks what I consider an important point about.....
- My own view is that what X insists is a_____is in fact a
- I wholeheartedly endorse what X calls „.....“
- These conclusions, which X discusses in _____, add weight to the argument that.....

ENTERTAINING OBJECTIONS (p. 78)

- *• At this point I would like to raise some objections that have been inspired by the skeptic in me. She feels that I have been ignoring....."....." she says to me.

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- >• Yet some readers may challenge the view that.....After all, many believe..... Indeed, my own argument that seems to ignoreand
- *• Of course, many will probably disagree with this assertion that

NAMING YOUR NAYSAYERS (p. 79J)

Here *many feminists* would probably object that

- But *social Darwinists* would certainly take issue with the argument that
- *Biologists*, of course, may want to dispute my claim that
- Nevertheless, *hoih followers and critics of Malcom X* will probably argue that.....
- Although not all *Christians* think alike, some of them will probably dispute my claim that.....
- *Non-native English speakers* are so diverse in their views that it's hard to generalize about them, but some are likely to object on the grounds that

INTRODUCING OBJECTIONS INFORMALLY (p. 80)

- *• But is my proposal realistic? What are the chances of its actually being adopted?

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- * Yet is it always true that _____? Is it always the case, as I have been suggesting, that _____?
- However, does the evidence I've cited prove conclusively that _____?
- "Impossible," you say. "Your evidence must be skewed."

**MAKING CONCESSIONS WHILE STILL
STANDING YOUR GROUND** (p. 85)

- * Although I grant that _____, I still maintain that _____.
- * Proponents of X are right to argue that _____ But they exaggerate when they claim that _____.
- While it is true that _____, it does not necessarily follow that _____.
- On the one hand, I agree with X that _____ But on the other hand, I still insist that _____.

INDICATING WHO CARES (p. 97)

- _____ used to think _____ But recently [or within the past few decades] _____ suggests that _____.
- What this new research does, then, is correct the mistaken impression, held by many earlier researchers, that _____.
- These findings challenge the work of earlier researchers, who tended to assume that _____.

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- > Recent studies like these shed new light on _____, which previous studies had not addressed.
- Researchers have long assumed that _____ For instance, one eminent scholar of cell biology, _____, assumed in _____, her seminal work on cell structures and functions, that fat cells _____ As _____ herself put it, "_____." (200-). Another leading scientist, _____, argued that fat cells "_____." (200-). Ultimately, when it came to the nature of fat, the basic assumption was that _____.
- But a new body of research shows that fat cells are far more complex and that _____.
- If sports enthusiasts stopped to think about it, many of them might simply assume that the most successful athletes _____ However, new research shows _____.
- These findings challenge dieters' common assumptions that _____.
- At first glance, teenagers appear to _____ But on closer inspection _____.

ESTABLISHING WHY YOUR CLAIMS MATTER (pp. 94-95)

X matters/is important because

- * Although X may seem trivial, it is in fact crucial in terms of today's concern over _____.
- Ultimately, what is at stake here is _____.

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- These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of.....
- My discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of
- These conclusions/This discovery will have significant applications in..... as well as in
- Although X may seem of concern to only a small group of, it should in fact concern anyone who cares about

COMMONLY USED TRANSITIONS

Cause and Effect

accordingly since
 as a result so
 consequently then
 hence therefore
 it follows, then thus

Conclusion

as a result
 consequently the upshot of all this, is that
 hence therefore
 in conclusion, then thus
 in short to sum up
 in sum, then to summarize
 it follows, then

Comparison

along the same lines likewise
 in the same way similarly

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Contrast

although nevertheless
 but nonetheless
 by contrast on the contrary
 conversely on the other hand
 despite the fact that regardless
 even though whereas
 however while
 in contrast yet

Addition

also in fact
 and indeed
 besides moreover
 furthermore so too
 in addition

Concession

admittedly of course
 although it is true that naturally
 granted to be sure
 I concede that

Example

after all for instance
 as an illustration specifically
 consider to take a case in point
 for example

Elaboration

actually to put it another way
 by extension to put it bluntly
 in short to put it succinctly
 that is ultimately
 in other words