

Using Block Quotes

Most of the work we do with quotations deals with how to understand the difference between a fact quote and an idea quote. We also deal with integrating quotes into your paragraphs, but we do not spend a lot of time on the block quote. While the block quote should be used sparingly, there are times when it is necessary to use it, and this worksheet provides some helpful hints.

- For the mechanics of using block quotes (i.e., how to indent and space them), consult the book Easy Access, which contains a section on how to properly place block quotes into your paper.
- Use the block quote sparingly! Frequent use of block quotes makes it look like you are “cheating” to make your paper longer. You should not use more than one or two block quotes in a five page paper. If you find that you have lots of block quotes in your paper, talk to your tutor about learning techniques for selecting and integrating quotes so that you can reduce the number of block quotations.
- Do not use the block quote to describe. Using a block of text that does nothing more than provide a description of a person and a place (these type of quotes would fall under the heading of “fact quotes”) makes your paper look clunky and it is an awkward diversion from the flow of your paper. Select two or three of the most effective descriptive phrases from the block of text you wish to quote and integrate those into your own text.
- Block quotes are most effective when you use them for anecdotes and stories. Sometimes an author will quote someone else or tell a brief story that perfectly illustrates the point you are trying to make, or serves as an entertaining example. In this case, it is appropriate to quote the entire passage in a block of text (do note that a block quote should probably not exceed six or seven lines in your paper).
- Since block quotes are separated from the rest of your text and draw the eye of the reader, make sure that they are introduced in a very simple manner. You do not want to include any of your important points or information right before a block quote because your reader might pass over it. Introduce block quotes with phrases like, “We see this in one of Faludi’s anecdotes: [block quote]” or “This point is clearly illustrated in the following example from Blackmore: [block quote].”
- It is not generally a good idea to end your paragraphs with block quotations, as this leaves your reader hanging. Be sure to explain and connect your block quotes in the same way that you would deal with any other quote. Even though the block quote is long, it cannot stand alone.