

Integrating Quotations into Sentences

You should never have a quotation standing alone as a complete sentence, or, worse yet, as an incomplete sentence, in your writing. *IVCC's Style Book* explains this concept well with a good analogy that describes quotations as helium balloons. We all know what happens when you let go of a helium balloon: it flies away. In a way, the same thing happens when you present a quotation that is standing all by itself in your writing, a quotation that is not "held down" by one of your own sentences. The quotation will seem disconnected from your own thoughts and from the flow of your sentences. Ways to integrate quotations properly into your own sentences are explained below. Please note the punctuation: it is correct.

There are at least four ways to integrate quotations.

1. Introduce the quotation with a complete sentence and a colon. **IC: quote**

Example: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states directly his purpose for going into the woods: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (27).

Example: The philosophy might be summed up best by the repeated request for people to ignore the insignificant details of life: "Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!" (Thoreau 28).

Example: Thoreau ends his essay with a metaphor: "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in" (50).

This is an easy rule to remember: if you use a complete sentence to introduce a quotation, you need a colon after the sentence. Be careful not to confuse a colon (:) with a semicolon (;). Using a comma in this situation will most likely create a comma splice, one of the serious sentence-boundary errors.

2. Use an introductory or explanatory phrase, but not a complete sentence, separated from the quotation with a comma. **Lead,**

Example: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states directly his purpose for going into the woods when he **says**, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (27).

Example: Thoreau suggests the consequences of making ourselves slaves to progress when he **claims**, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us" (49).

Example: Thoreau **asks**, "Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?" (32).

Example: **According to** Thoreau, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us" (48).

You should use a comma to separate your own words from the quotation when your introductory or explanatory phrase ends with a verb such as "says," "said," "thinks," "believes," "pondered," "recalls," "questions," and "asks" (and many more—see the table). You should also use a comma when you introduce a quotation with a phrase such as "According to Thoreau."

adds	defends	maintains
argues	demonstrates	objects
aspires	derives	offers
assumes	differs	presents
believes	disagrees	reasons
calculates	disputes	remarks
challenges	establishes	shows
claims	exaggerates	specifies
compares	feels	stresses
concludes	illustrates	suggests
contends	introduces	questions
contrasts	justifies	

3. Make the quotation a part of your own sentence without any punctuation between your own words and the words you are quoting.

Example: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states directly his purpose for going into the woods when he says **that** "I went to the woods because I wished to live

deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (27).

Example: Thoreau suggests the consequences of making ourselves slaves to progress when he says **that** "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us" (49).

Example: Thoreau argues **that** "shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous" (50).

Example: People are too often "thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails" (Thoreau 49).

Notice that the word "that" is used in three of the examples above, and when it is used as it is in the examples, "that" replaces the comma which would be necessary without "that" in the sentence. You usually have a choice, then, when you begin a sentence with a phrase such as "Thoreau says." You either can add a comma after "says" (Thoreau says, "quotation") or you can add the word "that" with no comma (Thoreau says that "quotation.")

4. Use short quotations--only a few words--as part of your own sentence.

Example: In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states that his retreat to the woods around Walden Pond was motivated by his desire "to live deliberately" and to face only "the essential facts of life" (27).

Example: Thoreau argues that people blindly accept "shams and delusions" as the "soundest truths," while regarding reality as "fabulous" (28).

Example: Although Thoreau "drink[s] at" the stream of Time, he can "detect how shallow it is" (29).

When you integrate quotations in this way, you do not use any special punctuation. Instead, you should punctuate the sentence just as you would if all of the words were your own. No punctuation is needed in the sentences above in part because the sentences do not follow the pattern explained under number 1 and 2 above: there is not a complete sentence in front of the quotations, and a word such as "says," "said," or "asks" does not appear directly in front of the quoted words.

All of the methods above for integrating quotations are correct, but you should avoid relying too much on just one method. **You should instead use a variety of methods.**

Notice the Punctuation!

Notice that there are only two punctuation marks that are used to introduce quotations: the comma and the colon (:). Note that a semicolon (;) is not used to introduce quotations.

Question marks and exclamation points go outside of the final quotation mark if the punctuation mark is part of your sentence--your question or your exclamation ("like this?"). Those marks go inside of the final quotation mark if they are a part of the original--the writer's question or exclamation ("like this!"). Also notice that there is always a period following the citation; the period is dropped from the original quotation but not the question or exclamation mark.

Material taken from the following source:

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