

Integrating Quotations into Your Writing

Quotation can be a valuable way to incorporate expert outside support into your essay, thus helping you prove your points. It's important to integrate quotations into your essay in a way that maintains the flow of your sentences and ideas. The sequence below can help you with get used to weaving quotations into your essay.

From Not-So-Good to Good: Draft One

Scott is a composition student working on an essay. He wants to include a quotation that supports his ideas, and he comes up with this:

Beer drinking has been a popular social activity for thousands of years. "Since the Egyptians first fermented grain along the banks of the Nile, beer has been a part of almost every society."

Paul has made a claim in the first sentence, and is offering a quotation to support it. This is generally a good idea--a writer should support assertions with specific evidence.

So what's the big problem here? One major issue is that the quotation isn't joined to the writer's own words; it's a "floating quotation," disconnected from other sentences. This disrupts the flow of the sentences--the passage seems clunky and underdeveloped.

Also, people reading this passage may get confused when they see the first quotation mark, and think, *Wait a minute...who's talking here? I don't know. It's not clear.* The quotation isn't cited properly, and the reader has no idea where it comes from, so its credibility is in question.

Draft Two:

Scott goes back to work on the quotation and comes up with this revision:

Beer drinking has been a popular social activity for thousands of years. "Since the Egyptians first fermented grain along the banks of the Nile, beer has been a part of almost every society" (Williams 65).

This time, Scott has included the citation information (in MLA form) for the quotation. This is an improvement, because it gives the reader some idea that the quotation comes from a printed text of some sort--the credibility has increased somewhat.

Still, the quotation remains disconnected from Scott's own words...it's still floating in the essay by itself. It still doesn't flow very well.

Draft Three:

Scott hits the drafting board again and comes up with this next version:

Beer drinking has been a popular social activity for thousands of years. According to Paul Williams, "since the Egyptians first fermented grain along the banks of the Nile, beer has been a part of almost every society" (65).

This is a definite improvement. Scott has used an introductory phrase—"According to Paul Williams"—to incorporate the quotation into the flow of his own sentences. Anyone reading this

would not be confused by who the quotation is from, because Scott has introduced the person to us. This flows much better than drafts one and two.

Scott might stop here—the quotation has been integrated into his own writing. But there might be ways to make it better. After all, do we know who Paul Williams is? Is he a recognized historian? Someone who is an expert?

Draft Four

Scott works on the passage again:

Beer drinking has been a popular social activity for thousands of years. Anthropologist Paul Williams writes that "since the Egyptians first fermented grain along the banks of the Nile, beer has been a part of almost every society" (65).

Now we know who Paul Williams is: an anthropologist. This helps the reader by establishing that this quotation comes from someone knowledgeable in the field. The credibility of the source is increased.

Draft Five

But Scott isn't satisfied yet, and after working on the section a little longer, he comes up with this final draft:

Beer drinking has been a popular social activity for thousands of years. In his book *The Birth of Beer*, anthropologist Paul Williams writes that "since the Egyptians first fermented grain along the banks of the Nile, beer has been a part of almost every society" (65).

Here Scott has included the text the quotation comes from as well, thus giving the reader even more information about the credibility of this information. The passage flows well and is quite clear. The result is that the reader is much more likely to be convinced of Scott's claim in the first sentence.

General Ideas

The overall idea here is to integrate your quotations in ways that create flow and do not confuse the reader. To do this, you can use a variety of structures.

Introduce the quotation at the beginning:

Professor Mahmoud Aziz asserts that Hemingway's reputation "is in large part dependent upon the real-world exploits of the author" (23).

Or in the middle of the quotation:

"Education without attention to the arts," explains theorist Elliot Eisner, "would be an impoverished enterprise" (1).

Or at the end:

"They can run, but they can't hide," warned President Bush during a recent press conference.