

THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

at **Sam Houston**TM
STATE UNIVERSITY

Quotations

Each citation style (e.g. MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) has its own rules for dealing with quoted material. For specific information on how to properly handle quotations, consult the appropriate style handbook. The examples for this handout use MLA formatting.

When to Quote

Use direct quotes sparingly. The bulk of your essay should appear in your original language. Sometimes, though, authors have worded something particularly well or can lend a point special authority. A direct quote may be useful in those cases. Any time you use a source's specific language, you quote it. Quotation marks indicate that the wording of the quoted material is "borrowed" from somewhere else.

How to Quote

The examples on this handout will quote from the following source:

Example: *In our analysis, we found that 24% of subjects who self-identified as creamy (E) peanut butter eaters chose not to eat a sandwich prepared with crunchy peanut butter. Several reported, "Crunchy is unacceptable." A much smaller segment of the crunchy (U) peanut butter eaters rejected sandwiches prepared with creamy peanut butter: a mere 5%. This data leads us to conclude that (E) is the peanut butter more likely to transcend boundaries of personal taste and achieve acceptability among a wider range of peanut butter consumers. Creamy peanut butter is more acceptable.* From: Smith, Jane. "Peanut Butter Preferences." *Journal of Snack Foods* 127.4 (Spring 2009). 12. Print.

Blending

You can seamlessly transition between your language and quoted language. In this case, do not use a comma to divide original and quoted language (that will be accomplished by the quotation mark). Do not capitalize the first letter of the quote unless it is a proper noun. These quotations would not be complete sentences without your words:

Example: *In 2009, a study by Jane Smith found that "[c]reamy peanut butter is more acceptable" (12).*

Floating

Quotations should always be attached to your own language, either through attribution or blending. Floating quotes causes a disruption in your paper.

Do not stick quotations on their own between sentences: *Creamy peanut butter is better. "[C]reamy (E) peanut butter eaters chose not to eat...crunchy peanut butter" (Smith 12). Crunchy peanut butter is worse.*

Do not follow a quote with a quote: *"[C]reamy (E) peanut butter eaters chose not to eat...crunchy peanut butter" (Smith 12). "Creamy peanut butter is more acceptable" (12).*

Attributing

You can identify in your own words who provided the quote. Use a comma to mark the entire quoted passage as self-contained and independent from the attribution. As with a sentence, begin quotations like the one above with a capital letter. Alone, the quotes would be complete sentences:

Example: Dr. Smith writes, “*Creamy peanut butter is more acceptable*” (12). Or “*Creamy peanut butter is more acceptable*,” Dr. Smith writes (12).

Altering Conflicting Stylistics

You may manipulate quoted material in minor ways to conform it to your stylistic needs. For example, if you need to use only present-tense verbs but your source uses past-tense verbs, you may adjust the verb tense. Indicate alterations you make to the quote’s language by using brackets.

Example: Smith claims that a minority of “non-partisan subjects [choose] crunchy” (12).

Dodging Conflicting Stylistics

You may limit quoted material to language that does not conflict with the stylistic requirements of your essay. For example, you may be expected to use only third-person pronouns. If the source uses the first-person (I, me, us, we, our), you can simply begin the quote before or after the problematic pronoun.

Example: Jane Smith found that “[c]reamy peanut butter is more acceptable” (12).

Economizing Quotations

It is best to include only as much of a source’s specific language as you need to meet your communicative needs.

You may “dodge” overly long quotations by using only the specific portion you need and otherwise utilizing your own language: *Smith discovered that nearly a quarter of the people who preferred creamy peanut butter “chose not to eat a sandwich prepared with crunchy peanut butter”* (12).

Alternatively, you may “alter” long quotations by removing their unneeded portions: *In 2009, Smith discovered that among creamy peanut butter eaters “24%...chose not to eat a sandwich prepared with crunchy peanut butter”* (12).

Quoting a Quote

You will need to alter the quotation marks used by your source to distinguish them from your own. Simply switch the source’s double " to a single '. Notice the “triple” mark that concludes the following example, which is actually a ' to close the source’s quotation and a " to close the essay’s quotation.

Example: Among those who declined crunchy peanut butter, Smith observes that “[s]everal reported, ‘Crunchy is unacceptable’” (12).