

USING QUOTATIONS IN YOUR STORIES

By the Word Witch
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1. Good quotes/bad quotes

(a) Do not quote a speaker's ordinary words. Some examples:

"You can't do that with PowerPoint," Chapman said.

"At the end of last month we were down to about \$65,000."

"There is some interest out there," she said.

"There'll also be an auction," he adds.

(b) Choose quotations that use lively language and give readers a sense of the speaker's character.

Here are some examples:

"It's like somebody kicked me in the gut and left his foot there," Phillips said.

"Us colored folk -- that's what we called it when I was coming along -- we get along better than we did back then," he said.

"This was politics at its worst."

She said, "I was like 'wow'."

(c) Avoid using single everyday words in quotations. For example:

The backlog covers all "open and active" cases.

The law firm received a large envelope "ostensibly" from American Express...

Phillips hopes the victory will launch what he called a "new" season.

Sutton said OSU won "probably" because of Allen.

(d) A rule of thumb is if the source can express the thought better, quote him. If the writer can say it better, paraphrase it.

2. Style use in quotes

We must follow the stylebook even though a statement is in quotes, specifically, ages, abbreviations and punctuation.

"We had a bit of an exchange between periods going off the ice, I don't remember what started it," MacIntyre said. WW: Two complete sentences need a period or semi-colon between them.

"I'm eager to get started, there's a good nucleus in place from last year's team," Garber said. WW: Ditto

"I always thought that when Corey played, he played the way I like, he played hard." WW: Thritto

"It's been fun with this eight-year-old kid." WW: Should be 8-year-old.

My dad took us to St. Petersburg, Florida, to see... " WW: should be Fla.

3. Transitioning into quotes & avoiding repetition

Transition smoothly into quotes, letting one idea flow to the next, while not repeating the same thought. Here are some examples of smooth transitions:

(a) Forced to choose between a cozy KU kingdom and returning to his alma mater, Roy Williams lost a competition with his stomach.

"I got up a couple of nights throwing up because I am emotional and I love two schools," said Williams.

(b) ...he said with a laugh. But Reyckert wasn't laughing as he quit a steady-paying job, hoping to create one on his own.

(c) One team has played in three of them. "That's us," Oklahoma All-Stars coach Rick McIntire said after his squad had defeated California 2-0.

Here are some examples of repetition in quotes and transitions:

(a) The board also approved \$80,000 for a second gang-prevention program to serve north Tulsa. An existing program, funded through the Office of Juvenile Affairs, serves the eastern part of the city. "We are focusing on north Tulsa," said Rhonda Brown, an Office of Juvenile Affairs spokeswoman. Board member Bob Wright said there are "a lot of homicides and strong gang problems in north Tulsa."

(b) Thurmond doesn't foresee any major change to the type of government, however. "I don't see any reason to change the city manager format," he said.

(c) A love of sports has stayed with Akin throughout his life. "I love college sports..."

Some quotes need to be paraphrased to avoid a weird juxtaposition: "People know that I've been shot ... That feels good."

4. Don't abut back-to-back quotes without a transition. (Sometimes called "stacking.")

"I don't think it's realistic to think we could pass something meaningful by Feb. 12," House Speaker Larry Adair, D-Stilwell, said.

"There will not be a bill on the governor's desk by Feb. 12, and there shouldn't be," Senate President Pro Tem Cal Hobson, D-Lexington, said.

5. Don't be afraid to cut sentences from quotes, as long as you don't alter the context or meaning.

You may pare quotes down to the gist of what people are saying. You don't have to put in every single sentence they say.

"Our marketing program has evolved to the point that it requires a more highly targeted strategy using localized marketing tools. Put another way, we need to concentrate on building market share for our branded marketer customers in high potential markets. NASCAR, with its more national reputation, no longer fits the direction many of our branded marketer customers are taking." WW: Repetitious gobbledygook; cut all but the last sentence.

6. Save some killer quote for a kicker or make the ending circle back to the lead.

Lead: Grab a laptop and do a Google search for the words "heart" and "Warrick Dunn." The search yields 1,550 matches.

Kicker: "I wasn't trying to do it for recognition," he said. "This came from my heart." There's that word again.

Tips from "The Word, An Associated Press Guide to Good News Writing," by Rene J. Cappon, 1982.

1. Use quotes to document and support third-person statements in the lead and elsewhere.

2. Use quotes to set off controversial material, where the precise wording can be an issue, as in legal contexts.
3. Use quotes to catch distinctions and nuances in important passages of speeches and convey some of the flavor of the speaker's language.
4. Use quotes to highlight exchanges and testimony in trials, hearings, meetings and other garrulous encounters.
5. "We're not in the business of protecting people from their own flapping tongues, but it's poor practice to make somebody look foolish in print when he has innocently misspoken himself."
6. Partial quotes should fit into the grammatical structure of the sentence.

Links:

15 Tips on Writing the Interview/Profile Story: <http://media.gatewayva.com/rtd/images/extras/pfiletip.doc>
Online Writing Lab: Quoting, paraphrasing, Summarizing:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_quotprsum.html

The Writing Center: Quoting and Paraphrasing Sources:

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

University College Writing Workshop: Using Quotations

<http://www.utoronto.ca/ucwriting/quotations.html>

Guide to Grammar and Writing: Quotation Marks:

<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/quotation.htm>

The Citadel Writing Center: Integrating Quotes:

<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/quotation.htm>

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<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~germantown/index.htm>