

Commandments for Using Direct Quotations in Scholarly Papers

1. Thou shalt NOT use direct quotations to try to make your point. Thou SHALT use direct quotations to demonstrate, support, exemplify, and illustrate your point.
2. Thou SHALT fit direct quotations to the point the quotations support. Thou shalt provide *context* so your reader can see the connection between your point and the quotations that support and illustrate that point.
3. Thou SHALT introduce all direct quotations, summaries, and paraphrases by giving the name of the author or the source. If possible (and it often is) you should also give the source's credentials when you first introduce the quotation and even the source itself.

Writing in The Bloomsbury Review (1992), James R. Hepworth, himself an authority on Wallace Stegner, claims that Stegner “changed the way western American writers think about themselves” (12).

4. Thou SHALT avoid—pass up, stay away from—long quotes. You should use individual words, phrases, clauses—parts of sentences—whenever possible and embed them into your own sentences.

Maclean classifies the “Continental Divide stories” as “slightly poetical . . . ‘human interest’ stories” that “if the mood were removed” would “not meet the approval of his [Paul’s] family” (16).

5. Thou SHALT put square brackets [] around words that you add to clarify a thought or help your reader make sense of the words you quote (as in the example above).
6. Thou SHALT alter—break up, shorten, modify, adjust, vary, rework—any direct quotation to fit the grammar of the your sentence.

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CORRECT

7. Thou SHALT use ellipses (. . .) to shorten long quotes and to indicate where you took out words.
8. To introduce a block quotation of one or several sentences, thou SHALT always state the point of the quote in one or two sentences of your own that precede the quote.
9. Thou SHALT place documentation *after* the quotation marks but before the ending punctuation of the sentence: “In our family,” Maclean writes in the opening lines of “A River Runs through It,” “there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing” (1).
10. Thou SHALT place periods and commas inside quotation marks and colons and semi-colons outside quotation marks.
11. Thou SHALT refer to events in television, plays, poetry, short stories, and novels in the present tense. Thou shalt think of these actions, in words of Maxine Hairston, “as performances that occur over and over again” (SFH 757).
12. Thou SHALT indent ten spaces to quote more than three lines of poetry unless the lines of the poem are extraordinarily long. Otherwise, handle poetry like a prose quotation, making sure to mark separate lines with slashes. Make sure to copy accurately and to include the poet’s punctuation:

William Blake’s opening lines of “The Tyger” may be the most famous lines in all of English literature. “Tyger, tyger, burning bright,/ in the forests of the night;” Blake begins, and then suddenly he poses this question: “What immortal hand or eye,/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry?”(1-4).
13. Thou SHALT copy direct quotations accurately and faithfully from their source, sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase, word by word.
14. Thou SHALT use [sic] and (sic) to indicate an obvious error in the source. Place [sic] or (sic) next to the error. Use brackets to mark internal errors inside quotations. On the other hand, if you can place sic (the Latin word for “so” or “thus”) outside the quotation itself, do so with parentheses.

Mr. Duffy's letter went on and on: "I would much have liked and even preferred a young bride, but at last I decided to marry the old window [sic] for her money."

Molly's paper was titled "King Leer" (sic).