

How to Integrate Research into a Paper: The Quotation Sandwich

A Writing Resource created by Simone Deahl for The Write Place

Quotations can enhance your paper, adding credibility and colour. However, when using quotations, you need to ensure that they fit within your paper and make sense to the reader.

Example: How can we make students more comfortable on campus? I think we should replace all of the desks at King’s University College with huge bean bag chairs. “A university is nothing without its students. Therefore, the main goal of a school should be supporting students” (Davidson, 2015, p. 45).

The idea of caring for students is related to the idea of comfort, but it does not support the specific suggestion of bean bag chairs. It seems like the quotation has been shoehorned in and is not really relevant to the main argument.

Better: How can we make students more comfortable on campus? I think we should replace all the desks at King’s University College with huge bean bag chairs. “Nothing cradles the bones of a weary scholar more comfortably than an oversized bean bag chair. This is because the design of the chair allows for a multitude of different positions and postures” (Huang, 2012, p. 30). Additionally, the casual atmosphere evoked by the chairs will put students at ease.

The quotation here is relevant to the argument being advanced. However, the relevance is not fully explained, and as a result it feels somewhat choppy. This is sometimes called a “dropped” or “dangling” quotation (Graff et al., 2018; University of Washington Bothell, n.d.). As a writer, it is your job to draw connections for the reader – don’t make them do the work for you. Remember that the reader has not done the same research on the subject that you have, and that what seems obvious to you may not be obvious to them. Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst (2018) suggest a technique known as the “quotation sandwich.” The top slice of “bread” introduces the quotation, potentially by giving some information about who you are quoting (and why they are an expert who should be listened to) or where you got the quotation from. The bottom slice explains the meaning of the quotation and how it relates to your argument.

Best: How can we make students more comfortable on campus? I think we should replace all the desks at King’s University College with huge bean bag chairs. As Mei Huang (2012), chairperson of the Society for Ergonomics, stated at the Annual Summit for Ergonomics in Education, “nothing cradles the bones of a weary scholar more comfortably than an oversized bean bag chair. This is because the design of the chair allows for a multitude of different postures and positions” (p. 30). Huang draws attention to the importance of allowing students to move freely in and out of a variety of positions. I believe that this physical freedom will translate into a psychological sense of freedom, encouraging students to think more creatively.

Some quotations require more explanation and analysis than others. Generally, quotations that are complex or difficult to understand will require more explanation. If you are in doubt, it is better to over-explain than under-explain.

References

Graff, G., Birkenstein, C., & Durst, R. (2018). *They say/I say: The moves that matter in academic writing*. (4th ed.) W. W. Norton & Company.

University of Washington Bothell (n.d.). *ESL: Dropped quotation*.

<https://www.uwb.edu/wacc/for-students/eslhandbook/droppedquotation>

Templates for Introducing Quotations

- ❑ X states, "Not all steroids should be banned from sports."
- ❑ As the prominent philosophy X puts it, " _____."
- ❑ According to X, " _____."
- ❑ X himself writes, " _____."
- ❑ In her book, _____, X maintains that " _____."
- ❑ Writing in the journal *Commentary*, X complains that " _____."
- ❑ In X's view, " _____."
- ❑ X agrees when she writes " _____."
- ❑ X disagrees when he writes " _____."
- ❑ X complicates matters further when she writes " _____."

Templates for explaining quotations

- ❑ Basically, X is warning that the proposed solution will only make the problem worse.
- ❑ In other words, X believes _____.
- ❑ In making this comment, X urges us to _____.
- ❑ X is corroborating the age-old adage that _____.
- ❑ X's point is that _____.
- ❑ The essence of X's argument is that _____.

Adapted from "*TheySay/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing (4th ed.)*", by Graff, G., Birkenstein, C., & Durst, R., 2018, p.47-48, W. W. Norton & Company