

# The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill



## HOW DO IS SET UP AND FOLLOW UP A QUOTATION?

Once you've carefully selected the quotations that you want to use, your next job is to weave those quotations into your text. The words that precede and follow a quotation are just as important as the quotation itself. You can think of each quote as the filling in a sandwich: it may be tasty on its own, but it's messy to eat without some bread on either side of it. Your words can serve as the "bread" that helps readers digest each quote easily. Below are **four guidelines for setting up and following up quotations**.

In illustrating these four steps, we'll use as our example, Franklin Roosevelt's famous quotation, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

### 1. Provide context for each quotation.

Do not rely on quotations to tell your story for you. It is your responsibility to provide your reader with context for the quotation. The context should set the basic scene for when, possibly where, and under what circumstances the quotation was spoken or written. So, in providing context for our above example, you might write:

When Franklin Roosevelt gave his inaugural speech on March 4, 1933, he addressed a nation weakened and demoralized by economic depression.

### 2. Attribute each quotation to its source.

Tell your reader who is speaking. Here is a good test: try reading your text aloud. Could your reader determine without looking at your paper where your quotations begin? If not, you need to attribute the quote more noticeably.

Avoid getting into the "he/she said" attribution rut! There are many other ways to attribute quotes besides this construction. **Here are a few alternative verbs, usually followed by "that":**

add	remark	exclaim
announce	reply	state
comment	respond	estimate
write	point out	predict
argue	suggest	propose
declare	criticize	proclaim
note	complain	opine
observe	think	note

Different reporting verbs are preferred by different disciplines, so pay special attention to these in your disciplinary reading. If you're unfamiliar with the meanings of any of these words or others you find in your reading, consult a dictionary before using them.

### **3. Explain the significance of the quotation.**

Once you've inserted your quotation, along with its context and attribution, don't stop! Your reader still needs your assessment of why the quotation holds significance for your paper. Using our Roosevelt example, if you were writing a paper on the first one-hundred days of FDR's administration, you might follow the quotation by linking it to that topic:

With that message of hope and confidence, the new president set the stage for his next one-hundred days in office and helped restore the faith of the American people in their government.

### **4. Provide a citation for the quotation.**

All quotations, just like all paraphrases, require a formal citation. For more details about particular citation formats, see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. In general, you should remember one rule of thumb: Place the parenthetical reference or footnote/endnote number after—not within—the closed quotation mark.

Roosevelt declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" (Roosevelt, *Public Papers*, 11).

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