# Incorporating quotations into your writing

When quoting or paraphrasing, make sure there is a clear distinction between your own ideas and those taken from someone else. You should introduce the quotation, incorporate it well into your sentence or the rest of the paragraph, and follow up with an explanation or interpretation of your own.

1. **Introduce and interpret your quotations**

Sample paragraph:

> The language used to talk about migrants and refugees often has negative connotations, even if unintentionally. "Floods of migrants expected in the next two weeks" (Jovic 13). "A swarm of refugees to enter the country"(Baker 32). These words may just be poorly chosen, but they reflect the growing anxiety about the arrival of those who depend on assistance and generosity of the local population.

There are two quotations here. They are neither introduced nor connected. They are left to just 'stand alone'. As a result, the reader will be left with questions: These quotations sound like headlines - are they headlines? When and where were they written or spoken? What was the context? When the writer says 'these words may just be poorly chosen', which words are they referring to?
These quotations need to be introduced more clearly, and the reason for their inclusion should be explained further.

Look at this improved paragraph, with the added parts underlined:

> The language used to talk about migrants and refugees often has negative connotations, even if unintentionally. In 2015, when thousands of migrants descended on camps in Calais, France, these headlines appeared in British newspapers: "Floods of migrants expected in the next few weeks" (Jovic 13); "A swarm of refugees to enter the country" (Baker 32). The words 'floods' and 'swarm' have a power to threaten and overwhelm: a 'flood' is a large, rising body of water, while a 'swarm' is a large and dense group of insects. These words may just be poorly chosen, but they reflect the growing anxiety about the arrival of those who depend on assistance and generosity of the local population. By using this type of language in their headlines, the media further spread the fear among the locals and reinforce the existing negative perceptions of the newcomers.

The writer has introduced the quotations more clearly and has given the context in which they were used. They also focused on particular words in the quotations and explained how

exactly the chosen quotations may affect their audience. This improved paragraph shows the writer's grasp of the wider context and their ability to analyse the effect and the consequences of the actions they describe.


### 2. Avoid ending a paragraph with quotations

Sometimes the students like to finish their paragraph with a quotation. This should be avoided, for similar reasons listed in the previous example. Let's see why.
Sample paragraph:

This is the end of a longer paragraph on Ebola and the importance of contact tracing.

> … It is, therefore, clear that contact tracing was one of the most effective ways for stopping transmission of Ebola in West Africa. However, in his study on *Representing Ebola*, Marouf Hasian Jr. says that this process was not straightforward and that nurses and contact tracers in Libya "were sometimes harassed or attacked by the communities who thought that the workers were the ones bringing Ebola […] These contact tracers, and thousands of other African volunteers and health care workers, risked their own lives as they travelled to villages and the 'slums' of West Africa between 2013 and 2015" (2016).

If you leave the paragraph like this, you are effectively asking your reader to interpret the evidence (your quotation) and your reasons for including this evidence. In the example above, the writer tells us that contact tracing was one of the best ways to tackle Ebola, but also that this wasn't always a straightforward process. What is the reader to conclude from this? Quotations should be followed by analysis and/or explanation, where you can demonstrate how this particular evidence is relevant and how it contributes to your main argument. You should use the end of the paragraph to draw a conclusion, link back to the main point of the paragraph, or discuss the implications of the point you are making.

Look at the improved paragraph:

> … It is, therefore, clear that contact tracing was one of the most effective ways for stopping transmission of Ebola in West Africa. However, in his study on *Representing Ebola*, Marouf Hasian Jr. says that this process was not straightforward and that nurses and contact tracers in Libya "were sometimes harassed or attacked by the communities who thought that the workers were the ones bringing Ebola […] These contact tracers, and thousands of other African volunteers and health care workers, risked their own lives as they travelled to villages and the 'slums' of West Africa between 2013 and 2015" (2016). <u>Hasian's example shows that contact tracing in West Africa had its own</u>

weaknesses and depended largely on the willingness and dedication of the local volunteers. Furthermore, if there is no understanding or education about the disease among the rural population, contact tracers may encounter hostility and work under harsh conditions. Since contact tracers were indispensable for stopping Ebola transmission, and will most likely be crucial in preventing any future disease transmission, it is essential that these volunteers feel safe and protected.

### 3. Your quotations/paraphrase should not be making your point for you

Look at this beginning of a longer paragraph on children and radiological testing:

> Children are often afraid of radiological testing because of fear of unfamiliar equipment (Ray, 2019). A different set of skills is needed to x-ray children successfully (such as radiographic positioning and choice of view), but emotional needs of the child and parents also need to be considered (Hardwick and Gyll, 2004). If a child needs an X-ray done in a general hospital, not in a children's hospital, it is the responsibility of the nurse to make sure the child is well prepared (Trigg *et al.*, 2010)…

The paragraphs suffers from a few issues: the writer never tells us what the main point of this paragraph is; the writer lets others 'speak' for them; the writer does not connect the information nor vary the way the paraphrase is presented. Even though paragraphs like these may present convincing evidence, they still remain just a list of someone else's facts or ideas, while the reader keeps guessing what the purpose of the paragraph is. How can we improve the paragraph? If your paragraph is highly factual and needs to present a lot of different evidence, you can still have a strong topic sentence and finish the paragraph by showing the significance of the evidence.

Look at this improved paragraph, with an added topic sentence:

> Since children are different from adults, both anatomically and psychologically, it is essential that radiologists and nurses are not only technically experienced in paediatric radiology, but are also trained to provide friendly, emotional support to both children and parents. For example, children are often afraid of radiological testing because of fear of unfamiliar equipment (Ray, 2019), and an experienced nurse could help by talking about the purpose of the machines or by letting the child handle some small equipment. According to Hardwick and Gyll (2004), a different set of technical skills is needed to x-ray children successfully (including radiographic positioning and choice of view), but emotional needs of the child and parents also need to be considered. Trigg *et al.* (2010) further emphasise the role of the nurse

and maintain that if a child needs an X-ray done in a general hospital, not in a children's hospital, it is again the responsibility of the nurse to make sure the child is well prepared (Trigg *et al.*, 2010)…

In this improved sample, the topic sentence tells us what point the paragraph is trying to make, while some of the paraphrase is explained or better connected with the help of phrases like 'Trigg *et al.* further emphasise the role of the nurse… or According to Hardwick and Gyll…

### 4. Use correct punctuation for introducing quotations

When integrating quotations into your sentences, use a colon ( : ) or a comma ( , ) before the quotations. If the quotation becomes a part of your own sentence, sometimes no punctuation is needed.

EXAMPLE 1: Colon

> Smyth argues against using open-ended questions in surveys: "With open-ended questions it is more difficult to analyse and interpret data" (99).

The colon is used here because the introductory sentence is a complete sentence.

EXAMPLE 2: Comma

> According to Allen, 'the failure of the narrator to see the truth is the real subject of the novel' (213).
> Allen suggests the opposite when he says, 'The failure of the narrator to see the truth is the real subject of the novel."

The comma is used here because the introductory sentences are incomplete.

EXAMPLE 3: No punctuation

> Edward Said was right when he warned that "exile is strangely compelling to think about, but terrible to experience" (173).

No punctuation is used here because Said's sentence is integrated in the writer's sentence. If the writer didn't use 'that', a comma would be needed.