

Quote Sandwich!

Courtesy New York City College of Technology

Text and design by Carrie Hall

When you bring someone else's words into your writing, you might THINK your readers know why the quote is there-- but many times, they don't! Remember: your reader is there to hear what YOU think. Does that mean you shouldn't quote others? Not at all! But it does mean that you need to EXPLAIN what the quote means to you, and you need to ANALYZE why that quote is important. The reader wants to see you in conversation with the other author!

STEP ONE: INTRODUCE THE QUOTE.

Look, if I just tell you, "Bob says there's no such thing as gravity, what are you going to ask me? That's right! Who the heck is Bob? The same is true with your quotes. If I say, "Bob Einstein, renowned physicist from Princeton, has been studying gravity for thirty years and thinks we may have gotten the wrong idea about what's keeping us afloat," there's a possibility my readers might believe me. After we know who's talking, you can put the quote in there. You still can't just throw it in. Use an introductory phrase like "Einstein says," or "Einstein writes." You may even give us more context here. For example: "In his 1989 treatise, Bob Einstein wrote, "just because my pen fell to the ground, it doesn't mean gravity made it happen" (Einstein 23).

STEP TWO: EXPLAIN THE QUOTE IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

Like I said above, you make think your readers know why you've chosen a quote, but they don't necessarily know! Your readers are interested in how you are interpreting something you read. For example, you may follow the quote above with a sentence that says: "In short, Einstein questions long-held assumptions about physics." OR you may write: "In short, Bob Einstein seems to believe that a Princeton degree allows him to rewrite the laws of physics, laws that were proven thousands of years ago.."

STEP THREE: ANALYZE THE QUOTE.

This is key!! Here is where you can respond to the quote, tell the readers how you feel-- you can also explain to your readers how the quote relates to your central question or your central point (your thesis) or the topic sentence of your paragraph. What do you want the reader to know about this quote? For example: "While I believe it's worth questioning authority, it's also best that we choose our battles and question issues that aren't indisputable fact. Not everything is a matter of opinion." What's really important to note here is that the explanation and analysis are A LOT longer than the quote itself!

Step One: Introduce the quotation

College provides a diversity of social, academic and athletic opportunities for students. This can be a powerful positive force, but it can also detract from students' abilities to manage their time. As former US President George W. Bush states, "I sometimes overdid it when I was at school, missing out on valuable academic opportunities. Fortunately, I buckled down in my senior year and managed to make a „C“ average and things have worked out fine since" (227).

Step Two: Explain what the author is arguing in the quotation.

College provides a diversity of social, academic and athletic opportunities for students. This can be a powerful positive force, but it can also detract from students' abilities to manage their time. As George W. Bush states, "I sometimes overdid it when I was at school, missing out on valuable academic opportunities. Fortunately, I buckled down in my senior year and managed to make a „C“ average and things have worked out fine since" (227). In this example, George W. Bush is pointing out that the positive extra-curricular activities of college life should be balanced with a responsible approach to studying; also, that the detrimental effects of earlier excesses can be rectified in the senior year of college.

Step Three: State the implications of the quotation for your own argument.

(What do you make of the author's argument?) College provides a diversity of social, academic and athletic opportunities for students. This can be a powerful positive force, but it can also detract from students' abilities to manage their time. As George W. Bush states, "I sometimes overdid it when I was at school, missing out on valuable academic opportunities. Fortunately, I buckled down in my senior year and managed to make a „C“ average and things have worked out fine since" (227). In this example, George W. Bush is pointing out that the positive extra-curricular activities of college life should be balanced with a responsible approach to studying; also, that the detrimental effects of earlier excesses can be rectified in the senior year of college. While George W. Bush is certainly correct when he implies that it is never too late for a student to try to raise his or her GPA, it is probably better for students to attempt to balance academic and other activities early in their college career. Also, Bush assumes that all students can achieve what they want with a „C“ average, but many students need higher GPAs in order to apply to professional school, graduate school and for graduate-entry jobs.