

“Quotations” and Attribution

Chapter 10



“Why Use Quotes?” he asked.

- Why? Because quotations add color and interest to news stories by allowing readers to “hear” many voices rather than just the voice of the writer.
- Three types of quotes:
 - Direct—present a source’s exact words
 - Indirect– aka paraphrasing
 - Partial– key phrases from a source’s statement and quote them directly

When to use direct quotes:

- Reporters use direct quotations when their sources say something important or controversial and/or state their ideas in an interesting, unusual or colorful manner.
- To tie a controversial opinion to the source...to reveal the speaker's character...when you cannot improve on the speaker's exact words

Using Direct Quotes

- Use to illustrate a point, not tell an entire story. Quotes should not be the entire story
- Reporters often summarize a major point, then use a direct quotation to explain the idea or provide more specific details about it.
- The quote should provide new information.

Using Indirect Quotes

- Use when sources fail to state their ideas effectively
- Indirect quotes also allow reporters to rephrase a source's remarks and state them more clearly and concisely



Using Partial Quotes

- Use to more clearly attribute to a source phrases that are particularly controversial, important or interesting
- Example: Phil Donahue accused the television critic of “typing with razor blades.”
- Avoid using “orphan” quotes– this is when quotation marks are placed around an isolated word or two that are used in an ordinary way. Example: He complained that no one “understands” his problem.

Changing/Fixing Quotes?

- Fixing or correcting grammatical errors in quotes is a widely accepted practice in journalism
- But not everyone, including the Associated Press, approves.
- “Never alter quotations even to correct minor grammatical errors or word usage,” the AP Stylebook states. “Casual minor tongue slips may be removed by using ellipses but even that should be done with extreme caution.”

The Importance of Attribution

- Attribution lets the reader/viewer know who the reporter's sources are
- This information lets readers/viewers draw their own conclusions about the credibility of the story



Statements Requiring Attribution

- Statements about controversial issues
- Statements of opinion
- All direct and indirect quotations
- Undisputed fact don't need attribution. Example: World War II ended in 1945.

Levels of Attribution

- On the record- everything the source says may be published and quoted directly, and the source may be fully identified by name and title
- On background- aka “not for attribution” meaning the reporter may quote the source directly but may not attribute the statements to the source by name. Example: “According to Pentagon sources...”

More Levels of Attribution

- On deep background- this source may not be quoted directly and may not be identified in any way. Example: "It has been learned that..."
- Off the record- usually means a source's information cannot be used, but is sometimes misunderstood. Be clear with your source in asking and understanding what you can and cannot use, as far as names, information, etc.

Anonymous Sources

- Preferably, all sources will go on the record so the reader/viewer knows where the information is coming from, the source of the information
- But sometimes a story cannot come out or be told any other way...whistleblowers, inside sources, etc.
- See Guidelines for Using Anonymous Sources on pages 256-7
- Note that anonymous and “off the record” sources can lead reporters to other sources and records/documents

Quotations Punctuation

- Incorrect: "I shall return", Gen. MacArthur said.
- Incorrect: "I shall," Gen. MacArthur said, "return."
- Incorrect: "I shall return," said Gen. MacArthur.
- Correct: "I shall return," Gen. MacArthur said.

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