

General Tips for Writing in Political Science





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Best practices for quoting

- Students tend to use too *many* and/or too *long* of quotes.
- How do you avoid this?
 - Paraphrase whenever possible, but otherwise, embed your quotes!
- How to embed quotes
 - Avoid long quotes; use only short, relevant quotes that directly support your point and are relevant to your argument
 - Introduce the quote with some context
 - Use ellipses to omit parts of the quote that are less relevant to shorten (but make sure it still makes sense to the reader)
 - Do not use quotes to exactly repeat something you have already said

Best practices for quoting

Are the following quotes embedded well or not?

- In the article, Long Title: With Longer Sub-Title, Name argues “to get someone to compromise you have to ensure the right setting, so you must first take them out to their favorite dessert place so they are happy and pliable” (Namerson 2003) 
- Duncan trusted Albert completely. Duncan said, “He was a gentleman; with whom I built an absolute trust” (citation). 
- There are a lot of ways to write this sentence...“there is no right or wrong way” (citation). 
- There are many benefits to negotiation, but perhaps most importantly “...compromise allowed us to avoid war” (citation). 

Best practices for quoting

- **Poorly embedded quote:** *In his article, Smith states that 'the earth is round' (p. 15). This quote is significant because it shows that people used to believe the earth was flat.*”
- Why is it bad?
 - Quote is not well integrated into the author’s argument and is too short to provide anything meaningful to the author’s point; it could have just been omitted or paraphrased
 - Subsequent post-quote analysis does not connect to the quote or elaborate on how it is relevant
- **A better way to embed the same quote:** *During the 16th century, it was widely believed that the earth was flat. However, as Smith (2010) points out, scientific observation and experimentation eventually proved otherwise. Smith asserts that 'the earth is round' (p. 15), a groundbreaking discovery that fundamentally transformed our understanding of the natural world. This example highlights the importance of scientific inquiry and the need for open-mindedness and critical thinking in the pursuit of knowledge.*”
- Why is this better?
 - Quote is introduced in the context of the larger argument
 - Author elaborates on the quote’s significance and broader implications by tying it back to the original point of the sentence

Best practices for citing

- No preferred citation format – can use whatever you are familiar/comfortable with.
- Otherwise, use APSA (go-to in poli sci) - <https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/references/>
- APSA follows an author-date citation practice, including (1) parenthetical citations within the text (placed at the end or middle of sentence where referenced material is used) and (2) a list of references at the end

APSA Examples

- Academic journal article: Herrmann, Richard K, and Jonathan W. Keller. 2004. “Beliefs, Values, and Strategic Choice: U.S. Leaders’ Decisions to Engage, Contain, and Use Force in an Era of Globalization.” *Journal of Politics* 66 (May): 557-80.
 - In-text: (Herrmann and Keller 2004)
- News article (online): Balz, Dan. 2007. ”Mixed Reviews for Clinton in Iowa.” *Washington Post*, January 29. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/28/AR2007012801321.html> (January 29, 2007).
 - In-text: (Balz 2007); if author not known: (Washington Post 2007)
- News articles can also be cited in running text (“As John Wayne noted in a New York Times article on June 20, 2002,...”) instead of using an in-text parenthetical citation

Miscellaneous Writing Tips

- Always refer to a country, individual, or group (proper nouns) in a consistent way
- Define acronyms/write out the full names when first using, then abbreviate (e.g. first time: “North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), subsequent times: “NATO”)
- Try to avoid starting too many sentences with “this” (usually you are referring to something specific, in which case you should be specific)
- Use consistent verb tense (pick present or past tense), and future tense when talking about hypotheticals