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## Using Quotations: A Short Guide

Key Points (Adapted From *Rules of Thumb*, pp. 79-80):

- **Quote Opinions or Key Phrases -- Not Facts or Events**
  - quote especially memorable or important phrases that capture key ideas of the original text
  - ex. Colson Whitehead suggests that “the first brick” in one’s “private New York” is the moment one sees the city for the first time (7).
- **Keep the Quotations Secondary to Your Own Words and Ideas**
  - This is especially important when writing an argumentative or analytic paper. Keep the emphasis on your own ideas; use quotations from the text to provide examples and illustrations of those ideas.
- **Don’t Use Too Many Quotations**
  - Whenever possible, paraphrase. Be wary of letting too many quotations overwhelm your own text.
- **Keep Your Quotations Brief**
  - Try not to quote whole sentences. Instead, quote especially important phrases. Use ellipses [. . . ] or paraphrasing to shorten quotations.
  - ex. Whitehead argues that “the city knows you [. . . ] because it has seen you when you are alone” (8).
- **Introduce Your Quotations**
  - ALWAYS introduce your quotations. NEVER begin a sentence with the quotation itself. Make sure that your reader understands who is speaking.
  - ex. WRONG: “The New York City you live in is not my New York City.”  
RIGHT: Whitehead points out that “the New York City you live in is not my New York City” (7).
- **Use Block Formatting for Long Quotations**
  - When quotations are more than a few lines long (something that should be rare), use block formatting. Introduce the quotation with a sentence that ends with a colon. Then, indent the quotation half an inch from the left margin. Here is an example:

Whitehead discusses the kinds of changes that can take place in a city like New York:

Go back to your old haunts in your old neighborhoods and what do you find: they remain and have disappeared. The greasy spoon, the deli, the

dry cleaner you scouted out when you first arrived and tried to make those new streets yours: they are gone. (6)

Whitehead discovers that one's "old haunts" have a way of disappearing in a city like New York.

- **Follow Each Quotation With an Explanation**  
-- See above. Imagine that your reader has skipped the block quotation. Why was it important? How does it relate to your argument?
- **Incorporate Each Quotation into a Clear Sentence**  
-- Quotations should fit seamlessly into your own sentences. Imagine that the quotation marks aren't there; does the sentence make sense?
- **Punctuate Your Quotations Properly**  
-- As a general rule, punctuation goes *inside* the closing quotation mark.  
ex. Whitehead believes that "you are a New Yorker when what was there before is more real and solid than what is here now."  
ex. Jody said, "That was the best essay I have ever read."
- **Make Sure That Your Quotations Are Accurate**  
-- Double check your quotations for accuracy! Respect the text!
- **Provide a Parenthetical Citation for Each Quotation That You Use**  
-- We will discuss MLA parenthetical citation in more depth later in the semester, but for now, you should cite the page number on which the quotation appears at the end of every sentence. Your paper should end with a "Works Cited" page that lists *The Place Where We Dwell*.  
ex. Whitehead believes that "you are a New Yorker when what was there before is more real and solid than what is here now" (6).

#### Works Cited

Whitehead, Colson. "The Colossus of New York." *The Place Where We Dwell: Reading and Writing about New York City*. Ed. Juanita But and Mark Noonan. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 2007: 6-9.