Quoting Smoothly

When using quotations in a paper, the quotation should become part of your sentence. Here are some tips that might help you produce this seamless effect.

• **Set up the quotation with a sentence of your own.** End this with a colon, following by the quotation. For example: Rev. Alexander Glennie eloquently emphasized the humane aspect of Christianity in his sermons to the slaves: "You should try and remember these parts of the Bible, that you may be able 'to do your duty in that state of life, unto which it has pleased God to call you'."

• **Precede a quotation with signal words, such as 'explains' and 'illustrates,' or 'continues' – followed by a comma.** Descriptive words like these are usually more interesting than using 'says.' For example: In explaining the causes of the United States' entry into World War I, Woodrow Wilson proclaimed, "We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, nor material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make."

• **Incorporate phrases and pieces of quotations into your own sentence.** Many African Americans agreed with David Walker's assertion that "America is more our country than it is the whites – we have enriched it with out blood and tears."

• **Don't just throw in a quotation if it makes the grammar incorrect.** You should not write, for instance, Gilgamesh told Siduri, after seeing her, that she should "let me not see the death which I ever dread." Instead, try one of these three options:

Gilgamesh told Siduri, "Now that I have seen your face, let me not see death which I ever dread."

Gilgamesh told Siduri, after seeing her, that she should not let him "see the death" that he feared so much.

Gilgamesh implores Siduri, after gazing at her, to help him confront his mortality: "[L]et me not see the death which I ever dread."

• **You may omit words from a quotation as long as you do no change its meaning.** To show that words have been omitted, replace them with three spaced periods – this is known as an ellipsis. Consider a text reading, "We are emaciated and starved. Our food is bad and mixed up with so much substitute stuff that it makes us ill." For the sake of brevity, you could write instead, "We are emaciated and starved. Our food is so bad…that it makes us ill."

• **When you are quoting something that is already in quotation marks in the text, use single quotation marks to denote the original quotation and double quotation marks to indicate your own.** For example, "Suppose than you said to me, 'Socrates, we shall acquit you, but only on one condition'….I should reply…'I owe a greater obedience to God than to you.'"

Remember that using proper quotation format not only adds polish and smoothness to your paper, it also guards against potential plagiarism. When in doubt as to whether or not to quote, it is always safer to use a quotation.