

Using Quotations

1

When to attribute

The reader assumes that the reporter is the source of information that's not attributed:

- action take by Congress or the city council or other agency that the reporter covers

2

- routine announcements whose facts are not questioned
 - upcoming meetings, charitable events etc.
- general background information

3

All other information needs attribution

- sources' comments and opinions
- disputed or sensational facts
- accusations
- etc.

4

Attribution words

SAID is usually the best word for attribution.

Avoid words such as **CONTENDED** or **CLAIMED**.

They imply that the reporter doesn't believe the statement.

SAID is neutral.

5

wrong: Lee claimed that taxes were already too high.

right: Lee said taxes were already too high.

right: Lee argued that taxes were already too high.

6

wrong: The senator contended that he wasn't waffling on the issue.
right: The senator said he wasn't waffling on the issue.

7

Be careful how you use these attribution words:
● **According to**
Avoid ACCORDING TO.
It is passive and ambiguous.

8

Use ACCORDING TO to refer to things that can't talk.
According to a State Department report, ...
According to the organization's Web site, ...

9

● **Explained**
Make sure the speaker is explaining, not saying, something.

10

● **Stated**
Only documents and formal announcements are stated; everything else is said.
The report STATED that crime is down 8 percent in the county.
The president's directive STATED that all refugees would be granted asylum.

11

● **Added**
Don't use ADDED as an alternative for SAID.
Use ADDED only the statement is an addition to the previous statement.

12

● **Revealed**

Use only when the speaker is disclosing a secret.

13

● **Admitted**

Avoid using ADMITTED; it implies that the speaker was caught in a lie or confessed to a crime.

Use ADMITTED only in reporting court testimony or in a direct quote.

14

● **Asked**

Use ASKED when the speaker asks a question:

“Why didn’t the police step in stop them?”
asked Joanne Drew, who witnessed the gang
attack in the park.

15

● **think or believe**

Avoid words such as THINK or BELIEVE.

You’re not a mind reader.

You only know what people say, not what they think.

16

wrong:

Lee believes that taxes were already too high.

correct:

Lee said he believes that taxes were already too high.

Lee said taxes were already too high.

Lee argued that taxes were already too high.

17

● **say vs. said**

SAY is both timeless and gives a sense of immediacy:

Stephen Hawking says the universe can be defined in one mathematical equation.

18

SAY – and the use of the present tense – is often preferred in feature writing:

“The universe can be defined in one mathematical equation,” Stephen Hawkings says as he quickly circles the room in his motorized wheelchair.

19

SAID is specific:

Stephen Hawkings said Saturday that the universe can be defined in one mathematical equation.

20

Direct quotations

Put quotation marks (“ ”) only around words that are direct quotes, which are the exact words the speaker uses.

The reporter is the only person knows what is a direct quote and what is paraphrased in the article.

21

If you change the wording, remove the quotation marks.

“I am not a crook,” Nixon told reporters.

Nixon said he was not a crook.

22

From the AP Stylebook:

Never alter quotations even to correct minor grammatical errors or word usage.

Casual minor tongue slips may be removed by using ellipses (. . .), but even that should be done with extreme caution. If there is a question about a quote, either don't use it or ask the speaker to clarify.

23

Do not routinely use abnormal spellings such as gonna in attempts to convey regional dialects or mispronunciations.

24

Washington Post parody video on journalism elitism, created for the 2008 Republican national convention:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/video/2008/09/05/VI2008090501238.html?hpid=topnews>

25

Thursday, April 12, 2001

LAT story on 98-year-old S. Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond's health and who might replace him:

But in places such as Mims' Corner Store in Edgefield, which looks just as it should with corncob pipes dangling from the wall, buckets of seeds on the floor and dusty old men sipping Bud and watching "The Price Is Right," such conversation draws some hard looks.

26

"It ain't nice to speculate on another man's demise," explained Louise Mims, the generously cut proprietor. "And Strom ain't going anywhere anyway. Y'all just wasting your time."

27

Partial quotes

– Use partial quotes for clarity and brevity:

poor: "We're going to, my boys are going to whip their ass on the court tomorrow night," the Lakers coach, Phil Jackson, said.

better: The Lakers "are going to whip their ass," coach Phil Jackson said.

28

Orphan quotes (single-word quotes)

– Use orphan quotes only when you to make it clear that the word is the speaker's and not the reporter's.

29

Bailey said he didn't believe peace in Northern Ireland was possible because he did not trust Catholic "scum."

30

Punctuation for quotes

Punctuation goes inside quotation mark

“Our poverty of values spares no group,”
Quayle said.

Quayle said, “Our poverty of values spares
no group.”

31

Quayle said the nation’s “poverty of values
spares no group.”

“What’s going on here?” he asked.
(don’t need a comma after the question mark)

32

running quotes:

“At the beginning of the presentation, Davidson
produced a 9-millimeter handgun and began firing
at panel members,” Sgt. Rod Vandiver said. “He
fired more than 20 rounds, reloading once.

“The three students at the presentation were
not hurt. Davidson apparently did not intend to
injure them,” he added.

33

running quotes with partial quotes:

Sgt. Rod Vandiver said that as the presentation
got under way, Davidson “produced a 9-millimeter
handgun and began firing at panel members.”

“The three students at the presentation were
not hurt. Davidson apparently did not intend to
injure them,” Vandiver added.

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Use a colon to introduce multi-sentence quotes

Sgt. Rod Vandiver said: “At the beginning of the
presentation, Davidson produced a 9-millimeter
handgun and began firing at panel members. He
fired more than 20 rounds, reloading once.”

35

Put SAID before the name only when a description or explanation of the person follows the name.

36

wrong: "Our poverty of values spares no group,"
said Quayle.

right: "Our poverty of values spares no group,"
Quayle said.

right: "Our poverty of values spares no group,"
said Quayle, who is a likely GOP presidential
candidate.