

Quotes

Quotes bring a story to life. Let your sources tell the story. The reporter's voice in the story should outline the main points and set the stage for the quotes.

Quotes let your sources "talk" to the reader, giving a personal impact that you can't get any other way in print.

But quotes should be special. Don't use quotes for information that can be more clearly explained in your own words.

Only direct quotes are contained inside of quotation marks. Information inside quotation marks must be the source's exact words. But another step is needed to achieve accuracy: The words inside the quotation marks must also convey the intent of the speaker. To use the speaker's exact words to say something he or she did not mean is to take the quote out of context. It is a serious complaint often made by sources. At the end of the interview, always check quotes that you intend to use, and if you are unsure what the speaker meant, ask.

The proper form for using a direct quote is: **"I won't run for president," Dan Quayle said Thursday. "But I may walk a little."**

Notice that punctuation is inside the quote marks. The quote is attributed after the first sentence.

Try to minimize the use of partial quotes: **When asked about his presidential plans, Quayle said he "won't run."**

The first example, using the full quote, is both more interesting and more accurate. The partial quote leaves a false impression.

Indirect quotes don't have to use the speaker's exact words, but they must convey what the speaker meant. For example:

Brett Favre Thursday denied reports that he would retire from football at the end of the season, but he said he is feeling his age.

Indirect quotes can be used to introduce direct quotes. For instance the next sentence in the Favre story could be:

"I feel every tackle of my career when I wake up in the morning," he said.

Make sure that the reader knows who is talking. If you've quoted one person for several paragraphs, and then plan to quote someone else, use a graph of transition between the two quotes. For instance:

Meanwhile, another city councilman had opposite views.

"I think the planned development stinks," said Councilman Joe Smith.

If you end one quote and start another without tipping off the reader, confusion will result.

Remember, you may accurately report what a person said, but that person may be wrong. Verify any questionable statement by calling other sources. It's not enough to say later, "But that's what he said."

Keep in mind that your goal is to inform your readers. Never rely on only one source. If you find that one of your sources doesn't have the information you need, switch sources.

Revision #1

Created Mon, Aug 31, 2020 10:26 PM by Jeff

Updated Mon, Aug 31, 2020 10:34 PM by Jeff