Guide for Quotations

Introducing Quotations
When you use quoted passages from a literary text, you need to introduce the quotations carefully. Your introductions should include three elements (not necessarily in this order):

1. Speaker (who is talking?)
2. Context (what is happening when the passage occurs?)
3. Significance (why is it important?)

That might seem like a lot of material to incorporate, but you can do it quickly. Note the efficiency of the following sample introductions and quotes.

Example 1: On a fishing trip with Quoyle, Dennis admits that he resents his father: “I never learned nothing from Dad. He kept everything to himself, like his knowledge was precious and would be wasted on me” (138).

EX 2: Returning to Chicago from his Mexican adventures, Augie March views his hometown in a state of admiring rapture: “Here it was again, the gray snarled city with enormous industry cooking and its vapor shuddering to the air, the climb and fall of its stages in construction or demolition like mesas” (425).

EX 3: When Jenny Fields meets Sergeant Garp in the military hospital, she notes that his brain damage has turned him into a child: “A small, neat man, the former ball turret gunner was as innocent in his demands as a two-year-old” (19).

Note: In EX 3, the introduction does not mention who the speaker is because we can infer from the quote that the speaker is the narrator.

Integration and Punctuation of Quotations
There are four ways to integrate quoted material into your essays.

1. When the introduction to the quotation is an independent clause (that is, it could stand alone as a complete sentence), use a colon before the quotation.

The three samples above are examples of this technique.

2. When the introduction ends with a phrase like “she says” or “he writes,” use a comma before the quotation.

EX: In response to Quoyle’s request for help with his boat, Dennis says, “Only take this thing out on quiet days. If it looks rough, you’d better get a ride with your aunt” (110).
3. Sometimes you can integrate the quoted phrases directly into the grammar and syntax of your own sentences. In this case, you don’t need introductory punctuation (other than quotation marks, of course).

**EX:** Jenny Fields’s editor warns her that readers will either think that she is “the right voice at the right time,” or they would “put her down as all wrong” (132).

4. Occasionally, you might want to begin a sentence with a quotation. In this case, place information about the quotation at the end of the quote or in the middle of it, as below.

**EX 1:** “Please do not get mixed up with your brother’s new relatives, those coarse people,” Augie’s mother begs him, fearing that he is going to follow Simon’s example.

**EX 2:** “You think it’s amusing now, I see you smiling,” Nutbeem tells a disbelieving Quoyle, “although you try to smile behind your hand, but wait until some of your friends go out for a two-hour trip and never make it home.”

**Block Quotations**

If your quotation runs longer than four lines on your page (or if it contains more than 100 words), set it off from your essay by beginning a new line and indenting one inch from the left margin. Continue to type double-spaced, without adding quotation marks. Generally you will use a colon to introduce a block quote, though occasionally the context will require a different punctuation mark or none at all. If you quote only a single paragraph or a part of a paragraph, do not indent the first line more than the rest.

**EX:**

John Irving ends *The World According to Garp* by reassuring readers that Garp will remain vital in the world that he has tragically departed:

Jenny Garp made a point of going into every bookstore and asking for her father’s books. If the store was out of stock, she would order. She had a writer’s sense of immortality: if you’re in print and on the shelves, you’re alive. Jenny Garp left fake names and addresses all over America; the books she ordered would be sold to *someone*, she reasoned. (436)

* Quotations come from Annie Proulx’s *The Shipping News*, John Irving’s *The World According to Garp*, and Saul Bellow’s *The Adventures of Augie March*. 