Using Quotes, Signal phrases and Parenthetical citation

Why do we use quotes?

- To offer evidence that agrees with your stance up to a point, then add to it with ideas of your own.
- To present evidence that contradicts your stance, and then argue against (refute) that evidence and therefore strengthen your position.

- Outside sources can be incorporated into your paper in three ways:
  1. Paraphrasing
  2. Embedded quotes
  3. Block Quotes

- Paraphrasing is by far the most sophisticated option, and usually the hardest. It’s much harder to rework somebody else’s thesis or idea into your own words than to simply copy what they wrote and put it in quotes. Remember that even if it’s in your own words, someone else’s idea still needs to be cited. At the end of your paraphrase, simply cite the source as you would if it’s a quote (author #).

Example: John Taylor Gatto insists that schools are more like jails than places to learn and grow (12).

- Embedded quotes are short quotes that are four lines or less and simply stay within the format of the paper itself.

Example: Kunstler said, “For many, the word development itself has become a dirty word” (10).

Kunstler said that “For many, the ……” (10).

- If you use “that” before a quote, a comma is not necessary.
- If you don’t, then a comma is required before the quotation.

- Block quotes should only be used if absolutely vital. Most professors see block quotes as fillers, so try not to use them unless you think they’re essential to your paper. For long quotations, the whole passage is indented ten spaces (or one inch or two tabs) from the left. If the quotation is more than four (4) typed lines of prose or more than three (3) lines of poetry, you should indent the quotation ten spaces and leave off the quotation marks. You are allowed to single-space long quotations if you wish. If you feel you must use a long quotation, please try to introduce your quotation by telling the reader 1) who is speaking and 2) what to pay attention to---that will better incline us to read what you have selected. You will see this invisible rule broken all the time, but generally by professionals who know why they are breaking the rules. Many students begin long quotations with “Emerson writes, “...” That is a start (at least I know who is speaking), but we also need to know what Emerson is saying before we read the quotation. After the quotation, be sure to evaluate or analyze what you have presented. Generally speaking, a paragraph-long quotation will require at least a paragraph of
careful explanation afterward. Notice how I tell readers what to “look” for as I introduce the following long quotation:

Example:

When the fog descends, Huck confesses that his rapid movement down the river makes him think about the flow of his own life:

I was floating along, of course, four or five miles an hour; but you don't ever think of that. No you feel like you are laying dead still on the water; and if a little glimpse of a snag slips by you don't think to yourself how fast you're going, but you catch your breath and think, my! how that snag's tearing along. If you think it aint dismal and lonesome out in a fog that way by yourself late at night, you try it once--you'll see. (Twain 80)

Note the use of the colon above to introduce the block quote.

- REMINDER!
  Works Cited pages should:
  1. Be titled: Works Cited (no bold, italics etc.). The title should be centered
  2. Be double-spaced.
  3. Be in alphabetical order by author’s last name
  4. Not have numbered entries
  5. Have every second line of an entry indented

A good online MLA source is

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html#Handling

What are signal phrases?
Signal Phrases alert the reader that a direct quote or a paraphrase is about to follow. When you choose to use quotations, make sure that they are integrated smoothly into the text of your paper. Readers should be able to move from your own words to the words you quote without feeling an abrupt shift. Signal phrases provide clear signals to prepare the readers for the quotation.

Example:
According to Stephen King, people enjoy watching horror movies because watching them helps to “keep the gators fed” (507). By this, King means that we all have a dark side, and we need to satisfy it in order to keep peace in our society.

Notice that the signal phrase is underlined in the above quote and it functions as an introduction to the quote itself. It tells the readers who is about to speak (Stephen King) and what the quote is about (why people enjoy watching horror movies). In addition to the signal phrase, quote, and parenthetical citation, the writer also adds an explanation of the quote—an effective strategy when using quotations in your paper so that your reader understands the point you’re trying to make.

We have two options for using quotations in our own writing:
1. We can blend the quotation into our own sentence. Use this option when you only need to quote a phrase—not a complete sentence.

- According to Peter Elbow, freewriting “is the process of writing nonstop for a certain number of minutes or pages” (505).
- Freewriting “is the process of writing nonstop for a certain number of minutes or pages” (Elbow 505).

2. Or, we can introduce the quotation with a complete sentence and as a complete sentence. This requires use of a colon (:) after the signal phrase. Use this option when you want to quote a complete sentence.

- Peter Elbow provides a simple definition of freewriting: “The pre-writing strategy of freewriting, which I use to help overcome writer’s block, is the process of writing nonstop for a certain number of minutes or pages” (505).

Effective signal phrases include the author’s name and usually an action verb that characterizes the information. Try varying the placement and language of the signal phrase to avoid repetition. The following sample signal phrases show how their placement and language can be varied to avoid repetition:

- Serino and Fernandez argue that “…” (87).
- As Kelly Rhodes notes, “…” (45).
- George Marcus, Associate Professor of Anthropology, contends that “…” (23).
- “…,” states Ella Jones, “but …” (141).
- “…,” according to President Obama (223).
- Paula Zahn offers another perspective: “…” (337).

For each quote, make sure you’ve followed all of these steps:
1. Chose a quote that is relevant to your point.
2. Introduce the quote with a signal phrase.
3. Provide correct parenthetical citation.
4. Explain the relevance of the quote to your own ideas or thesis.
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<th>Verbs to Use in Signal Phrases</th>
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<td>acknowledges</td>
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Choose appropriate verbs so the reader knows if the source is refuting a claim, illustrating a point, or comparing points of view. Also, be consistent with verb tenses; MLA usually uses the present tense (e.g. “notes”) or present perfect tense (e.g. “has noted”).