Please note: most University of Portsmouth courses require that students use the Harvard APA referencing system. The exceptions at the time of writing are:

- Students of the School of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences, who are expected to use the ‘Vancouver’ referencing protocol.
- Students following History courses in the School of Social, Historical and Literary Studies (SSHLS), who are expected to use a protocol that uses footnotes.
- Undergraduate students of Architecture, who may be given a choice of referencing styles.
- Students of the School of Law, who may generally be expected to use the Oscola referencing protocol.

If you fall into any of the above categories, you must NOT write citations (the part with the name, date and page number) like those in the examples below.

What exactly is a direct quotation?

A direct quotation is an extract copied exactly from a source (e.g. a book or article on a reading list). Here’s an example:

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According to Gross (1996, p. 317), it is “not only the vocabulary of a language that determines how and what we think and perceive but also the grammar”.
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The part that is copied exactly from the source is marked by quotation marks (“ ”) – one at the beginning and one at the end. (In this handout we’ve used double quotation marks. Some writers use single marks. Check your course or unit handbooks to see if you are expected to use either double or single marks; if no advice is given, choose one and stick to it consistently.) **If you choose to use a direct quotation in this way, you must use the exact words used in the original. Equally, you must, if you use the exact words from a source, add the quotation marks (and a citation; see below) – otherwise you are plagiarising.**

In academic writing, any direct quotation will be accompanied by a citation (an in-text reference). In the example above, the citation is the part that shows the author’s surname (Gross), the year of publication and the page from which the quotation comes.

Remember the difference:

**Quoting:** copying the exact words of the original and showing this with quotation marks.

**Paraphrasing:** putting the original into your own words (no quotation marks needed).

**Citing:** adding the author’s surname, year of publication and (normally) page number, to show where you found your quotation, or the information that you have paraphrased.
Why use direct quotations?

There are several possible reasons for using direct quotations in academic writing. Most commonly, they are used to provide an example or supporting evidence for a point that you wish to include in your assignment. It is important, however, to remember two key points:

- The way in which direct quotations are used in academic writing varies greatly from subject to subject.

  Students of History or English, for example, might use quotations in a very different way from students of Biology or Computing. Thus it is essential to consult your course handbook, to learn from your markers’ feedback and to read around in your subject; doing these will help you to get a feel for the way in which direct quotation is and is not used in your subject.

- In many (but not all!) subjects, you are expected to use no more than a handful of direct quotations in any one assignment (and it may well be fine to have none).

  In many subjects, tutors often prefer students to paraphrase or summarise information from sources, rather than quoting them directly. Putting something into your own words does, after all, show more effectively that you have understood it! This means that if you do choose to use a direct quotation, you should have a good reason for doing so.

How can direct quotations be used in an assignment?

You should aim to do the following:

- Make sure you use any direct quotations to support, not decide, the points you are making in your assignment.

  *not*…

  That quote will look great in my essay. I must get it in somewhere - it’s bound to earn some marks.

  *instead*…

  I've already planned the structure of my essay, and this quote will support one of my points really well.

- Link any direct quotations with your own writing.

  Any quotations must follow logically from the preceding text – your reader must not be left thinking ‘what’s this quotation doing here?’ Additionally, it may be useful to comment on the quotation in the writing following it. See the next page for some examples.
There are a number of conventions, followed in most subjects, which are used in the presentation of direct quotations. Unless your tutors or handbooks specify otherwise, it is probably best to follow these conventions. Our examples will use this original text from page 317 of the book *Psychology* by Richard Gross:

> But it is not only the vocabulary of a language that determines how and what we think and perceive but also the grammar. In the Hopi language, no distinction is made between past, present and future; it is a ‘timeless language’ (compared with English), although it does recognise duration, i.e. how long an event lasts. In European languages, ‘time’ is treated as an objective entity, as if it were a ruler with equal spaces or intervals marked off, and there is a clear demarcation between past, present and future (corresponding to three separate sections of the ruler).

1. **Include short quotations** (normally less than three lines) **in the run of your text**. Use quotation marks to separate the quotation from your text. For example:

   According to Gross (1996, p. 317), it is “not only the vocabulary of a language that determines how and what we think and perceive but also the grammar”. An example of this might be…

   You can also place all three citation elements after the quotation. For example:

   Furthermore, it is “not only the vocabulary of a language that determines how and what we think and perceive but also the grammar” (Gross, 1996, p. 317). An example of this might be…

   Notice how the quotation has been blended into the writer’s own words (using “it is”) to make a grammatically correct sentence. This helps the writing to ‘flow’.

2. **Separate longer quotations** (more than three lines) from your text by leaving a line’s space above and below and indenting the quote by one tab. Such indented quotes should also be single-spaced (unlike the rest which is likely to be double- or 1.5-spaced).

   Writing about Hopi, a Native American language, Gross writes:

   In the Hopi language, no distinction is made between past, present and future; it is a ‘timeless language’ (compared with English), although it does recognise duration, i.e. how long an event lasts. In European languages, ‘time’ is treated as an objective entity (Gross, 1996, p. 317).

   The distinction drawn between the languages’ treatment of time is interesting and relevant to this argument because…

   Note that longer quotations that have been indented do not need quotation marks.
3 You must **copy the punctuation of the quotation** exactly. The only exception to this rule concerns the beginning and end of sentences. To maintain grammatical accuracy you can, for example, change initial letters (from upper to lower case or vice versa), and add full stops, provided this makes no difference to the meaning of the original (shown here again):

> But it is not only the vocabulary of a language that determines how and what we think and perceive but also the grammar. In the Hopi language, no distinction is made between past, present and future; it is a ‘timeless language’ (compared with English), although it does recognise duration, i.e. how long an event lasts. In European languages, ‘time’ is treated as an objective entity, as if it were a ruler with equal spaces or intervals marked off, and there is a clear demarcation between past, present and future (corresponding to three separate sections of the ruler).

Extracted quote with permissible alterations:

> Gross (1996, p. 317) has noted that “in European languages, ‘time’ is treated as an objective entity”. This might be seen as another reflection of culture, because…

4 If necessary, **you can omit parts of the quotation** if you use three dots (an ellipsis) to show where you have ‘cut’ text and most importantly as long as your omission does not change the meaning of the quote. For example:

> Gross (1996, p. 317) points out that in language it is “not only the vocabulary… but also the grammar” that influences how and what we understand.

5 If necessary, to clarify meaning, you can add a few words of your own (this is known as interpolation) to a quote if you put the extra words in square brackets and, again, as long as your interpolation does not change the meaning of the quote. For example:

> Gross emphasises the contrast: “in the Hopi language, no distinction is made between past, present and future [whereas] in European languages… there is a clear demarcation between [them]” (Gross, 1996, p. 317).

**Reference**


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1 Ever wondered about those quotations on film posters? “Enthralling… a masterpiece” could, if the film company was very dishonest, come from a review that actually said “Enthralling it is not, and it’s hardly a masterpiece”. But of course no film company would dare to be so dishonest.