

The Quote Sandwich
(Adapted from *They Say/I Say*, pp. 41-5)

The Dangling Quote and Why You Should Avoid It

A frequent flyer in most inexperienced writing, the dangling quote is one of the things that can seriously get in the way of argument development. We tend to think of argument as something abstract and global but, in reality, concrete strategies like framing quotations can make a big difference in the overall strength of the paper. A dangling quote looks something like this:

Jim Morrison stated that sandwiches are important to him. “In all my years as an avid sandwich consumer, I have never been so insulted. Nothing comes between me and my sandwich.”

Framing a Quote: The Quote Sandwich

The quote sandwich consists of three ingredients:

Top slice: Introducing the Quotation

Introducing a quotation is pretty simple. All you need to do is give basic information about the author or piece (or both). However, be wary of overusing words like “states” or “according to.” You’ll find that if you introduce your quotations by stating the author’s specific position or tone in the quoted text, your subsequent analysis will be more effectively previewed.

Here are some templates from *They Say/I Say*:

X states, “_____”
As the prominent philosopher X puts it, “_____”
According to X, “_____”
X agrees when she writes, “_____”
X complicates the matter when she writes, “_____”

Meat & veggies: The Quote

Be selective about what you quote! Remember, for most cases, only about ten percent of your entire paper should consist of quotations. Practice paraphrasing and summarizing instead.

Bottom slice: Explaining the Quotation

When explaining your quote, analyze the connection between the new information your quote is providing and the information you have already provided in your topic and thesis sentence. Don’t expect the reader to make this connection! The more you can make the nuances evident, the more effective your overall argument will be.

Here are some templates from *They Say/I Say*:

Basically, X is saying...
In other words, X believes...
In making this comment, X argues that...
X is insisting that...
The essence of X’s argument is that...

Jim Morrison expressed his shock over the scandal at Green Peppers by decrying, “in all my years as an avid sandwich consumer, I have never been so insulted. Nothing comes between me and my sandwich.” Morrison’s statement encapsulated the general feelings of the crowd, who proceeded to trash the locale uttering cries of anarchy.