

How to quote in an essay: Basic introduction

Being able to show where your ideas come from or quote famous people or sources is an essential in good essay writing. Below is a simple poem, an essay question about the poem, and, on the next page, a sample essay showing how to quote effectively. Make sure you follow the same format (punctuation, etc.) when you use quotations in your essays.

A Little Ditty about Essay Writing (by Matthew Claflin 2008)

There are a few things I have to say
About when you do an es-say.
May I make a suggestion?
Be sure to read the question.

Do just as it says,
Answer all of the parts.
And don't forget in the right location
To use quotation.

Here is the essay question about the poem:

Question – What is the central point of this poem? What does it tell you about essay writing?

Look at the next page for the essay:

Matthew Claflin

123456

Date

A poem about Essay Writing

The title of this poem, “A Little Ditty about Essay Writing,” tells us the poet is trying to give advice on how to write an essay. The suggestions he provides are the central focus, and the points he talks about tell us a great deal about essay writing.

From the last line of the first stanza, “Be sure to read the question.” we can see that the poet thinks it is very important to understand what the question is asking. As the other three lines of the first stanza sound like an introduction and lead up to this last line and the second stanza also talks about it, it can be argued that this is the most important line, and thus the central point of the poem.

In the second stanza, the poet elaborates (*tells us more*) about how to write an essay to answer that question which you have been “sure to read.” The lines, “Do just as it says, Answer all of the parts.” shows that the poet thinks it important to read the essay question carefully and reply to all of the different sections in the question. His final line, about not forgetting “to use quotation,” is a reminder to include quotes in answering the question.

Perhaps the poet is a teacher and his intended audience is students. The fact that he uses the word “ditty” shows that he is trying to be entertaining. Whatever the situation, this poem provides an amusingly written quick introduction to how to write an essay, the most important point being to answer the question you are asked.

(269 words)

An introductory note about listing references:

References (put a title like this and write them in alphabetical order)

Clafin, M. (2007) A Little Ditty About Essay Writing. *File on Essay Writing* (pp.3-5). Kyoto. Kyoto Sangyo University Press.

(Note the order here – family name and initial, (year published), title of article (if it is a book you don't need this part), title of book, place of publishing, publisher)

If this were from an on-line source, then you would write:

Clafin, M. (2007) A Little Ditty About Essay Writing. *File on Essay Writing* (pp.3-5).

Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/index-ksu.html>.

This style of referencing is called the APA style and there are also on-line guides for it. It can get quite complicated, so if you are not sure, then just do the best you can to make it clear where your information comes from.

Please note that are going to quote from many different books or sites, you need to say each time where the information is coming from in the actual essay. For example:

As Clafin (2008) states, “Make sure you know what you are doing.”

Final note: This is a simplified explanation of how to quote and list references. If you study abroad or at a higher level, the requirements will be more complicated.

Written by Matthew Clafin