

The Art of Using Quotations

You can avoid “hit-and-run quotations”—quotations that are quickly dropped into a paragraph, without warning, context, or follow-up—by following the simple steps below.

Step 1: Introduce the quote.

Good example: You’ve done the research, so you know why the gathered information is both important and relevant. Share this knowledge with your audience.

The banning of private ownership of automatic rifles will make for a safer country. **In her recent study of national gun control policy, “Firearms and Violent crime in America,” Janet Smith argues that “the proliferation of privately owned rifles only promotes violent crime” (Smith 2).**

Bad example: This is a “hit-and-run” quotation, or a “dropped quote.” The information is not contextualized: it sticks out like a sore thumb.

The banning of private ownership of automatic rifles will make for a safer country. “The proliferation of privately owned rifles only promotes violent crime” (Smith 2). It seems reasonable to demand that the federal legislature should create a special panel to address this gun control issue.

Step 2: Analyze the quote.

It’s not enough to simply tell your audience where your quote comes from. You have to show them why it matters to your paper.

The banning of private ownership of automatic rifles will make for a safer country. In her recent study of national gun control policy, “Firearms and Violent Crime in America,” Janet Smith argues that “legal sanction of privately owned rifles only promotes violent crime” (Smith 2). **Smith’s research shows a direct correlation between firearm laws and criminal behavior. Her observations support my argument that ownership of automatic rifles should be illegal. Therefore, it seems reasonable to demand that the federal legislature should create a special panel to address this gun control issue.**