Block Quotations

A quotation with 40 or more words should set as a “freestanding block of text” (APA, 2010, p. 171). Such a quotation, called a block quotation, should begin on a new line and be indented 0.5 inches from the left margin. If a block quote consists of multiple paragraphs, then “indent the first line of each an additional half-inch” (APA, 2010, p. 171). Additionally, block quotes should be double-spaced, and no quotation marks are required.

Example

The following passage from the Publication Manual of the APA is taken from a section that addresses when one should seek an author’s permission to reprint or adapt a large selection from a text. Below is what a block quote should look like in an APA paper:

It is the author’s responsibility to find out whether permission is required from the copyright owner and to obtain it for both print and electronic reuse. APA cannot publish previously copyrighted material that exceeds the copyright holder’s determination of “fair use” without permission.

If you must obtain written permission from the copyright owner, append a footnote to the quoted material with a superscript number, and in the footnote acknowledge permission from the owner of the copyright. Format the footnote as shown in Chapter 2, section 2.12. (APA, 2010, p. 173-4)

The paragraph following a block quote should be flush with the left margin (in other words, don’t indent). After this paragraph, you may indent the next as normal.

As a final tip, use block quotes sparingly: they are helpful for extended definitions and emphasizing an author’s main point, but should be used infrequently in favor of paraphrases.