Supporting Your Opinions
The Art of Balancing Quotes and Commentary in an Essay
QUOTING: How much is enough? How much is too much?
Some problems with quoting . . .
PROBLEM #1: Some writers don’t quote enough.

I can’t find the original quote—where was it located?

Why would I want to quote someone else? My own ideas are better!

Selecting good quotes is too much trouble!
However . . .

When you support your own opinions with ideas and facts from reliable outside sources . . .
your paper gains credibility.

- Your reader will respect the breadth of your research.
- Your reader will respect your use of “the experts.”
- Your own opinion will appear stronger when you support it with well chosen source material.
PROBLEM #2:
Some writers quote too much.

• Each quote is too long.
• Too many quotes are used.
• There is not enough discussion of each quote (commentary).
You DO need to support your ideas with evidence from reliable outside sources.

HOWEVER . . .

You want to use quotes sparingly so your own voice remains dominant.
Balance your presentation with quotes from outside sources AND your own commentary on the quotes.
Quoting what “they say” must always be connected with what you say. (Graff and Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say*).

And you need to make that connection clear to your readers!
The balancing of evidence and commentary is often called the “sandwich” or “hamburger” method of supporting a point.
The HAMBURGER:

TOP BUN: Introduce your point or opinion.

MEAT: Support it with a quote from a reliable source.

BOTTOM BUN: Add your commentary, reflecting on how the quote relates to and supports your point.
MMM . . . DELICIOUS!
EXAMPLE #1:

*You say:* Of the newest smart phones, Apple’s iPhone 4S is one of the best available today.

*They say: (QUOTE from source)* According to PC World magazine, “[T]he improved camera, faster performance, and the addition of Siri make [the 4S] a top-ranking smart phone.”
You say: Most customers will appreciate making calls and accessing data without frustrating delays, and with Siri, the iPhone 4S can converse with the user using a natural language interface. These features, along with the improved camera, will make Apple’s latest smart phone a good choice.
EXAMPLE #2:

You say: Athletes have a special challenge in balancing sports and their academic courses.

They say: *(QUOTE from source)* Recent research suggests that “student-athletes spent more time on athletics than academics and if they were given more time, many indicated they’d devote it . . .
to their sport, rather than to academics or other extracurricular activities. However, student-athletes are held accountable for getting it done in the classroom, too. Each is required to earn a minimum number of credits toward graduation each semester and student-athletes who perform poorly academically put their eligibility at risk” (NCAA).
Clearly, college athletes have a lot at stake as they try to excel in sports and academics. While performing well in both requires balancing their time and energy, many athletes may neglect their studies in favor of their sport.
EXAMPLE #3:

You say:  The evidence for human-caused global warming is strong.

They say:  (QUOTE) As reported by the IPCC, “The widespread change detected in temperature observations of the surface, free atmosphere, and ocean, together with consistent evidence of change in other parts of the climate system, strengthens the conclusion that greenhouse gas forcing is the dominant cause of warming during the past several decades.”
You say: The IPCC’s thorough research of air and ocean temperatures is very convincing. If greenhouse gases are the major cause of global warming, and if human activity is the dominant source of greenhouse gases—as other evidence suggests—then clearly human beings bear a major responsibility for climate change.
Balancing opposing views with your own rebuttals

In many of your college papers, you are required to include the views of people who disagree with your opinion. Your paper gains credibility when you quote the ideas of experts on the other side of the issue. In your rebuttal, however, you need to demonstrate that your own view is the most reasonable one.
**EXAMPLE:**

*You say:* As we have seen, current evidence presents a strong case for human-caused global warming.

*They say: (QUOTE)* However, there are some people who contend that the problem is insignificant. In 2008, Dr. Arthur Robinson of the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine announced . . . that more than 31,000 scientists have now signed the . . .
Oregon petition rejecting the IPCC line on climate change ("Scientists Question Climate Change").

Now, add your rebuttal:

You say: However, according to the New Scientist, most of these skeptics are not even experts in climate change. Many are mineralogists or geologists who have a stake in the continued extraction and use of fossil fuels (LePage).
Always use clear transitions to introduce your source material.

EXAMPLES:

As one source suggests, . . .
According to the IPCC, . . .
James Hansen, a NASA scientist, states, . . .
The EPA claims that . . .
As noted by the NCAA, . . .
Transition smoothly and clearly between your view and the opposing view.

EXAMPLES:

Although the evidence is strong for human-caused climate change, some believe otherwise.

Some researchers, however, challenge the view that human beings are changing the climate.
By balancing your voice with voices from your research, and by balancing opposing views with your rebuttals, you can write a more persuasive essay.