Suggested Ways to Introduce Quotations

When you quote another writer's words, it's best to introduce or contextualize the quote. Don't forget to include **author's last name and page number (MLA)** or author, date, and page number (APA) in your citation. Shown below are some possible ways to introduce quotations. The examples use MLA format.

* You can use a full sentence followed by a colon to introduce a quotation.
Examples: The setting emphasizes deception: "Nothing is as it appears" (Smith 1).
Piercy ends the poem on an ironic note: "To every woman a happy ending" (25).
* You can also begin a sentence with your own words, then complete it with quoted words. Note that in the second example below, a slash with a space on either side ( / ) marks a line break in the original poem.
Examples: Hamlet's task is to avenge a "foul and most unnatural murder" (Shakespeare 925). The speaker is mystified by her sleeping baby, whose "moth-breath / flickers among the flat pink roses" (Plath 17).
* To quote a critic or researcher, you can use an introductory phrase naming the source, followed by a comma. Note that the first letter after the quotation marks should be upper case. According to MLA guidelines, if you change the case of a letter from the original, you must indicate this with brackets. APA format doesn't require brackets.
Examples: According to Smith, "[W]riting is fun" (215).
In Smith's words, " . . .
In Smith's view, " . . .
* Another way to introduce a critic's words is to use a descriptive verb, followed by a comma. Avoid using says unless the words were originally spoken aloud, for instance, during an interview.
Examples: Smith states, "This book is terrific" (102).
Smith remarks, " . . .
Smith writes, " . . .
Smith notes, " . . .
Smith comments, " . . .
Smith observes, " . . .
Smith concludes, " . . .
Smith reports, " . . .
Smith maintains, " . . .
Smith adds, " . . .
* If your lead-in to the quotation ends in that or as, don't follow it with a comma. The first letter of the quotation should be lower case.
Examples: Smith points out that "millions of students would like to burn this book" (53).
Smith argues that " . . .
Smith emphasizes that " . . .
Smith interprets the hand washing in MacBeth as "an attempt at absolution" (106).
Smith describes the novel as "a celebration of human experience" (233).