

Exercises

1. To get a feel for Peter Elbow's "believing game," write a summary of some belief that you strongly disagree with. Then write a summary of the position that you actually hold on this topic. Give both summaries to a classmate or two, and see if they can tell which position you endorse. If you've succeeded, they won't be able to tell.
2. Write two different summaries of David Zinczenko's "Don't Blame the Eater" (pp. 139–41). Write the first one for an essay arguing that, contrary to what Zinczenko claims, there are inexpensive and convenient alternatives to fast-food restaurants. Write the second for an essay that agrees with Zinczenko in blaming fast-food companies for youthful obesity, but questions his view that bringing lawsuits against those companies is a legitimate response to the problem. Compare your two summaries: though they are of the same article, they should look very different.

THREE

"AS HE HIMSELF PUTS IT"

The Art of Quoting

A KEY PREMISE of this book is that to launch an effective argument you need to write the arguments of others into your text. One of the best ways to do this is by not only summarizing what "they say," as suggested in Chapter 2, but by quoting their exact words. Quoting someone else's words gives a tremendous amount of credibility to your summary and helps ensure that it is fair and accurate. In a sense, then, quotations function as a kind of evidence, saying to readers: "Look, I'm not just making this up. She makes this claim and here it is in her exact words."

Yet many writers make a host of mistakes when it comes to quoting, not the least of which is the failure to quote enough in the first place, if at all. Some writers quote too little—perhaps because they don't want to bother going back to the original text and looking up the author's exact words, or because they think they can reconstruct the author's ideas from memory. At the opposite extreme are writers who so overquote that they end up with texts that are short on commentary of their own—maybe because they lack confidence in their ability to comment on the quotations, or because they don't fully under-

value of
quoting

problems
of
quoting