



Attribution: The art of stating who said it.

# Attribution

1. Attribute all second-hand information, criticisms, statements about controversial issues, opinions, and all direct and indirect quotations.
  - Remember to not attribute undisputed facts. Barack Obama being the president should not be attributed, whereas someone citing their opinion on the president should.
2. Punctuate the attribution properly. Put a comma after attribution introducing a one-sentence quotation and a colon after attribution introducing two or more sentences of quotation.
  - Writers need to know to properly attribute, **SOMEONE SAID, not SAID SOMEONE. Similarly, naturally one would say "she/he said" rather than "said she/he"**.
  - *Exception: When attributing a long title to a source, the order is reversed. For example, "Nationwide, Nordstrom's sales are flourishing. It's like Christmas came early," said Jamie Houston, Vice President of Marketing for Nordstrom.*

# Attribution

3. Put the attribution at or near the beginning of a long quotation. Readers need to know who is saying what in a long quotation.
4. Attribution that appears in the middle of a sentence should come at a natural break rather than interrupt a thought.
  - *Example: a man named Logan Greene says, "For years it's been profitable being a mechanic in this city, but now I don't know what I'll do because they're all different. They said training could take up to 6 months. My family doesn't have that much time."*

This is a long quite quote, so to break up - stop at natural pauses.

**WRONG:** "For years," Logan Greene said, "it's been profitable being a mechanic in this city."

**RIGHT:** "For years it's been profitable being a mechanic in this city," Logan Greene said. "They said training could take up to six months."

# Quotes vs. Reported Speech

- **QUOTE:**
  - Ms Mar said: "Students can expect no special treatment if they go on strike."
- **REPORTED SPEECH:**
  - Ms Mar said that students could expect no special treatment if they went on strike.
- **Verb Change:** although quotes must be word-for-word, reported speech is a report of something which was said in the past, so the tenses have to be changed.
- "that" is often left out to reduce the length of the sentence, but can be included whenever it makes the meaning of a sentence clearer.

# How often should you use attribution?

- The good journalist has to strike a balance between the need to make clear attribution of statements and the risk of boring the reader with too many phrases such as "he said".
- Change the word "said" occasionally
- The phrase "according to" can be used in attributing reported speech, but do not use it more than once with any single speaker.



Alternatives for the word “said”



# How often should you use attribution?

- If the statements are reliably factual throughout, you only need to attribute occasionally.
- If, however, the story is heavy with opinion or unreliable statements, you should attribute at least once every two sentences.

# Attributing facts and opinions

- There are also things which people want you to believe are true but which are either not provable or are lies.
- These people may not knowingly tell a lie, but many people are careless with the truth.



# Opinions

- In cases where fact and opinion are not easily separated, play safe and attribute the story.
- There is no alternative to attribution when statements made are opinions. If you do not attribute an opinion to an individual, your audience will assume that it is your own opinion - and there is **no excuse** for that kind of confusion in a news story.