

QUOTES

Effective Journalism

A DIRECT QUOTATION THAT CONVEYS A FACT IS USUALLY BORING.

~~✗~~ “The new dorm will house 36 students in apartment-style units,” said Sally Smith, director of Residence Life. “The apartments themselves are bright and airy. I think students will love them. When you have four students living in the unit, it gets real cozy, real quick. So by December, there's not that much room for a traditional Christmas tree. And there are fire code restrictions that prevent students from bringing in live trees. We needed to do something about that. So we're putting a Godzilla tree in the lobby.”

- ◉ *Bo-ring! You should paraphrase those dry facts, and use direct quotes to present the opinions, emotions, and promises of your sources.*

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🗣️ According to Sally Smith, director of Residence Life, “The apartments are very bright and airy. I think students will love them.”

- ◉ *A little better, but one expects the director of residence life to go on the record saying her dorms are great; we learn very little from this direct quotation. This part of the quote isn't news.*

A DIRECT QUOTATION THAT CONVEYS A FACT IS USUALLY BORING.

- *A good reporter can set the stage in such a way that even a fairly brief quote can have dramatic impact.*

☑ College students have barely begun to unpack their bags, but one administrator at a local college has already figured out how she can help the 36 new residents decorate for the holidays.

In a busy college residence, “it gets real cozy, real quick,” according to Sally Smith, director of residence life.

“So we're putting a Godzilla tree in the lobby,” she said.

- *Journalists are experts at slipping in concrete details unobtrusively. This revision conveys some factual information about the dorm (the number of residents, the fact that it's an apartment-style dorm), but the quote works because it expresses some of the speaker's opinions and personality.*

IN GENERAL, A JOURNALIST SHOULD PARAPHRASE DRY FACTS, BUT DIRECTLY QUOTE THE EMOTIONS, OPINIONS, AND PROMISES VOICED BY THEIR SOURCES.

~~✗~~ Fred Jones is eager to move into Newcomb Hall. "It's supposed to be ready Oct 15, but I can't wait that long," he said. "It's gonna be a sweet dorm."

- ◉ *In this example, Jones does give a quote worthy opinion of the new dorm, but because the reporter has already told us that Jones is "eager to move in," that steals the punch from the direct quotes "I can't wait" and "it's gonna be a sweet dorm," both of which already convey eagerness.*
- ◉ *Perhaps more serious is quoting student Fred Jones as the source of the Oct 15 date. Jones is here just passing along something he heard; he could be spreading a rumor.*
- ◉ *Keep Jones for his opinion and his enthusiasm, but cite an authority for the date.*

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- ✓ Construction on a new apartment-style residence hall will begin in April, university officials announced. Sally Smith, director of residence life, unveiled the plans at a ceremony Thursday afternoon.
- Fred Jones is one of the 36 students who will live there. "It's gonna be a sweet dorm," he said.
- Smith shares Jones's enthusiasm, but not his terminology. "The word 'dorm' comes from the Latin for 'sleep,'" she said. "Our students do so much more than that in their residence halls."
- *But what about the date the dorm will be ready?*

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📌 The dorm, which will open on October 15, will house 36 students in apartment-style units.

- ◉ *Will it? Who says? This is a promise, even a prediction. It's something that the school administration hopes will happen, so it's a kind of opinion.*
- ◉ *Since there is no way for you, as the reporter, to hop into time machine and found out whether the dorm really will open on time and as planned, you should treat it the same way you would treat an opinion.*
- ◉ *But hold on...*

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~~❌~~ “The new dorm will house 36 students in apartment-style units,” said Sally Smith, director of Residence Life.

⦿ *But wait a minute! Now we're back with a boring quote!*

✅ The plans call for a new 36-bed residential facility, with 8 individual units housing 4-6 students.

⦿ *That's better.*

THE REPORTER IS AN INVISIBLE OBSERVER

- In traditional journalism, reporters are invisible observers. They should not casually refer to their own participation in the events they describe.
- “When I arrived at the event..” or “After I asked him...”

THE REPORTER IS AN INVISIBLE OBSERVER

 Self-Referential (too personal)	 Passive Revision (too awkward)	 Invisible Observer
<p>When I climbed the stairs to John Smith's apartment, I heard a strange, rhythmic thumping. Could it be bongo drums? I opened the door, and saw Smith sitting on the floor, banging away. He smiled at me and told me to come in.</p>	<p>Outside John Smith's apartment, a strange thumping could be heard. Could it be bongo drums? When the door was opened, Smith could be seen sitting on the floor, banging away. A visitor is smiled at and welcomed.</p>	<p>The thump of bongos fills the stairwell outside John Smith's apartment. Pounding away, Smith welcomes a visitor without missing a beat.</p>
	<p>When editing to remove self-references, avoid the quick fix of resorting to passive verbs.</p>	