

## Attribution

- In print newswriting, attribution, if included in a lead, should be placed toward the end of the lead. It should never be used as the lead's [first verb](#). The first verb should focus instead on the most important "what" of the story. Usually, that's not the fact that something was said.
  - For example, in the lead, "Mayor John Smith announced Friday that Murfreesboro's crime rate dropped 20 percent last year," the first verb, announced, suggests that the single most important aspect of the story is that Smith announced something. But he's the mayor - he announces stuff all the time. A better first verb would focus the lead on *what* he announced: "Murfreesboro's crime rate *dropped* 20 percent last year, Mayor John Smith announced Friday."
- Incidentally, the exact opposite is true for a broadcast lead . Broadcast leads routinely use an attribution word as the first verb. The idea is that when people are listening to - as opposed to reading - a story, they need a little time to tune in. So a broadcast lead about the crime rate drop will read, "Mayor John Smith *announced* Friday that Murfreesboro's crime rate dropped 20 percent last year."
- When attribution follows a statement, introduce the attribution with a comma. Like this: "I have vetoed the bill," the president said. He will veto the bill, the president said. The president has vetoed the bill, according to a statement released Friday. But: The president said he will veto the bill.
- What should be attributed? Attribute assertions that represent judgments or opinions. Don't attribute known facts. For example, "The rose is red." But "The rose is beautiful, he said."
- In most cases, set off quotes in their own paragraph (set up the quote with a summary, or lead-in paragraph):

Not all students are happy with the new student center, and some complain that the school never asked for their opinions.

"I don't think it's fair for the administration to make these kinds of decisions without getting more input from us," said sophomore, Jason Smith.

The coaches train the players long hours, and expect the extensive practice to pay off on game day.

"When our women hit the field, Saturday, I want to know that we've done everything we can do to get them in top physical condition for the long, hard competition ahead of them," said Head Coach Malcolm Scott.

The program, scheduled to begin in early September, includes original watercolor paintings, ceramic pottery, and audio-visual slide presentations.

"We're just about as excited as we can be to have such a fine display of artwork available for our students, faculty and staff," said Savannah Artworks Coordinator, Jennifer Cox.

Be selective about what you choose to present as a direct quote. Nine times out of 10, you can use a paraphrase to do a better job than the source did of saying what the source said.

- When you use a direct quote, it's important to use a quote that forms a complete sentence. In other words, don't use a [partial quote](#).
- Always set up a quote by preceding it with a paragraph that:
  - Indicates who is about to talk
  - Gives a general paraphrase of what he or she is about to say
- Then present the quote in its own paragraph. Here's an example (also note the punctuation):

Detective Jason Smith said the suspects, both wanted in five states on charges of murder, kidnapping and robbery, should be considered armed and dangerous.

"These two guys make Bonnie and Clyde look like a traveling circus," Smith said. "These guys are elusive, calculating and, above all, deadly."

Police described the pair as traveling in a stolen, dark blue Ford Explorer with Maryland license plates. A reward of \$50,000 has been offered for information leading to their arrests.

- Note how the first graf indicates who's about to speak (Detective Jason Smith) and gives an idea of what he's about to say (the suspects should be considered armed and dangerous). The second graf presents the quote. The "Smith said" is optional. It's pretty clear that Smith is talking. This format helps the reader keep track of who is saying what in a story. One of the most confusing things you can do in mass media writing is present two quotes, back to back, from two separate sources without indicating that the speaker has changed.
- The story then continues with a new paragraph.
- Also note the correct punctuation for quotes:
  - Smith said, "The festival is for everyone."
  - "The festival is for everyone," Smith said.
  - "The festival," Smith said, "is for everyone."
  - "The festival is for everyone," Smith said. "Children are especially welcome."