

## Quotes use more

Getting the Story · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

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Do you think you could make more use of quotes? I think you should. Why use quotes? Because in mainstream articles, reading the actual words that a person spoke, helps to enliven and humanise the article. All articles benefit from direct quotes from people. Tend to select those quotes that reflect FEELINGS and OPINIONS rather than facts and figures. You can put facts in your own words. Some of my students ask me about "changing" quotes. Can a journalist change the words used inside quotation marks (the person's spoken words)? The answer is YES. And of course you can cut words out. But if you cut words from the middle of a sentence you usually put an ellipsis (three dots like this . . . ) to indicate something was omitted. In fact all journalists have to change people's words slightly because people pause, repeat themselves, cough, make grunts and exclamations like "aggh!" or hesitations like "er, er, um, er, ummm.." If journalists actually quoted people verbatim it would make for slow reading! Also it would be considered wrong to quote a person with a heavy accent saying: "Yo' donna know 'ow 'ard ita isa to doa thisa." What you can't do is change the words the person said or was obviously trying to say. You can't change the meaning of his or her sentences. But then again if it's the president of the United States declaring war or denying an affair, you'd better stick to exactly what he said. You can always phone your interviewee and read-back the quotes over the phone without having to read the whole story.

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