Integrating Quotations into Your APA Paper

When you use quotations, you must integrate them smoothly into your writing to avoid choppy, incoherent sentences. A common complaint instructors have about student research papers is that sometimes quotations simply show up in the paper with no introduction, attribution, or apparent reason. Without context-setting information, the reader cannot know how the writer connects the quotation with its surroundings.

Always make sure your reader knows who said the quoted words; otherwise, you have used a disembodied quotation (some call them floating quotations). In these cases, quotation marks set off someone else’s words, but just doing that tells the reader nothing about who is being quoted and why. That’s what good attribution and proper documentation are for.

NOTE: A quotation should almost never begin a paragraph. Rely on your own TOPIC SENTENCE to start or set up the paragraph.

NO:

What would you say if you found out that over one-half of teen drivers are impaired while driving? No, I’m not talking about drinking and driving or being stoned while driving. I’m talking about behavior just as dangerous: teens who text while they drive. According to an Associated Press (2012) article, a survey by the state of Connecticut showed that over 50% of teen drivers talk and text while they are driving (para. 3). However, is that just a Connecticut phenomenon? You’ll be safe unless you drive in Connecticut? Unfortunately, no. “A national study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention . . . found 58 percent of teens across America acknowledged engaging in that behavior.” It’s no secret that many teens are hooked on texting, but this addiction threatens not only the person doing the texting but also the rest of us.

NO (but closer):

What would you say if you found out that over one-half of teen drivers are impaired while driving? No, I’m not talking about drinking and driving or being stoned while driving. I’m talking about behavior just as dangerous: teens who text while they drive. According to an Associated Press (2012) article, a survey by the state of Connecticut showed that over 50% of teen drivers talk and text while they are driving. However, is that just a Connecticut phenomenon? You’ll be safe unless you drive in Connecticut? Unfortunately, no. “A national study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention . . . found 58 percent of teens across America acknowledged engaging in that behavior.” (Associated Press, 2012, para. 4). It’s no secret that many teens are hooked on texting, but this addiction threatens not only the person doing the texting but also the rest of us.

You at least now have some attribution immediately after the quote, but the quote is still stand-alone. It isn’t “hooked” to anything or anyone actually saying it. You still have your quote separated from the attribution by the period at the end of the sentence.
YES: What would you say if you found out that over one-half of teen drivers are impaired while driving? No, I’m not talking about drinking and driving or being stoned while driving. I’m talking about behavior just as dangerous: teens who text while they drive. According to an Associated Press (2012) article, a survey by the state of Connecticut showed that over 50% of teen drivers talk and text while they are driving. However, is that just a Connecticut phenomenon? You’ll be safe unless you drive in Connecticut? Unfortunately, no. The same Associated Press (2012) article reported that “a national study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention . . . found 58 percent of teens across America acknowledged engaging in that behavior” (para. 4). It’s no secret that many teens are hooked on texting, but this addiction threatens not only the person doing the texting but also the rest of us.

Note that I have now turned what was a complete sentence into part of a that clause, so the “a” is no longer capitalized. APA allows you to change a single letter like this (to cap or not capped) without using brackets to indicate that you have done so.

Of course, I have underlined and italicized the attribution above for clarification. You would not do this in your own paper. The point is that all quotes should be “hooked” to somebody or something saying them.