PUTTING DETAILS and ELABORATION TOGETHER: QUOTE WEAVING - THE ESSENTIAL RULES
1. Pick DETAILS from the text that will support your THESIS—your argument.
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Let’s say I’m trying to prove that **young Sedaris judges the Tomkey family as strange or inferior**.

**Original quote from “Us and Them”**

“Because they had no TV, the Tomkeys were forced to talk during dinner. They had no idea how puny their lives were, and so they were not ashamed that a camera would have found them uninteresting. They did not know what attractive was or what dinner was supposed to look like…” p. 13

**This detail is strong, but it’s too long.**
2. Honing the Detail: Decide which parts of the detail are worthy of a direct quote and which parts you can paraphrase. The star of the writing is **YOU** and **YOUR THINKING**.

Keep in mind, when we talk about using a *quote* from a text, that can mean description, dialogue, action--any part of the text.
2. Honing the Detail: Decide which parts of the detail are worthy of a direct quote and which parts you can paraphrase.

Again, I’m trying to prove that young Sedaris judges the Tomkey family as strange or inferior.

Original DETAIL from “Us and Them”

“Because they had no TV, the Tomkeys were forced to talk during dinner. They had no idea how puny their lives were, and so they were not ashamed that a camera would have found them uninteresting. They did not know what attractive was or what dinner was supposed to look like…” p. 13
2. **Honing the Detail:** Decide which parts of the detail are worthy of a direct quote and which parts you can paraphrase.

Though this is a single adjective, it is such distinct diction chosen by the writer—not a common word. Without quotes, I would be plagiarizing.

“Because they had no TV, the Tomkeys were forced to talk during dinner. They had no idea how puny their lives were, and so they were not ashamed that a camera would have found them uninteresting. They did not know what attractive was or what dinner was supposed to look like…” p.13
Some details are not worthy of a direct quote

- Don’t put a basic fact or object from a text in quotes, unless it’s very unique or distinct. The following example contains unnecessary quoting:

- *The narrator invites strangers to hold up “poster boards” as part of a “flash mob” designed to win back his “ex-girlfriend Deborah” (Monks 17).*
This detail is easy to PARAPHRASE.

• The narrator invites strangers to hold up poster boards as part of a flash mob designed to win back his ex-girlfriend Deborah.

• Reserve direct quotes for words or phrases where the author’s choices can’t be beat.
3. Weave the direct quote DETAILS into your own words (ELABORATION).

Here are the details from the longer quote that I’ve decided to use. But now I have to figure out how to cushion them inside a sentence.

“forced to talk during dinner”
“puny”

Think of quote weaving as providing a couch made up of your words that the details can comfortably sit on.
3. Weave the direct quote DETAILS into your own words (ELABORATION).

Since they choose to live without television, Sedaris believes the Tomkeys are “forced to talk during dinner” and even refers to their lives as “puny” because of their lack of exposure to media and popular culture (13).

Oh, that is one comfy elaboration couch!
Since they choose to live without television, Sedaris believes the Tomkeys are “forced to talk during dinner” and even refers to their lives as “puny” because of their lack of exposure to media and popular culture (13).
“Because they had no TV, the Tomkeys were forced to talk during dinner. They had no idea how puny their lives were, and so they were not ashamed that a camera would have found them uninteresting. They did not know what attractive was or what dinner was supposed to look like…” p.13
Since they choose to live without television, Sedaris believes the Tomkeys are “forced to talk during dinner” and even refers to their lives as “puny” because of their lack of exposure to media and popular culture (13).

Most of the time, the goal should be to create a sentence where the majority of the writing is yours.
4. When weaving a direct quote DETAIL, use the author’s **exact words**. We cannot change the writer’s choices.

**COMMON MOVIE MISQUOTES**

"Luke, I am your father," from *The Empire Strikes Back*.  
**Actual quote**: "No, I am your father."

"Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.  
**Actual quote**: "Magic mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?"

"Do you feel lucky, punk?" from *Dirty Harry*.  
**Actual quote**: "You've got to ask yourself one question: 'Do I feel lucky?' Well, do ya punk?"
5. Weave! Don’t Dump!

*Dumping:*

The narrator has clearly spent a great deal of time designing an elaborate plan to win his former girlfriend back. “However, I’m sure Deborah being Deborah will break my heart yet again” (Monks 18).

This direct quote has no couch to cushion it. It’s all by itself.

Besides being dumped, notice how the switch from Third Person POV to First Person POV is confusing for the reader.
5. Weave! Don’t Dump!

**Dumping:**

The narrator has clearly spent a great deal of time designing an elaborate plan to win his former girlfriend back. “However, I’m sure Deborah being Deborah will break my heart yet again” (Monks 18).

**Weaving:**

Though the narrator has clearly spent a great deal of time designing an elaborate plan to win his former girlfriend back, he feels certain that “Deborah will break [his] heart yet again” (Monks 18).

Notice how the quote has been woven *into the sentence*. There’s a couch of words to cushion it. Also, it’s now all in Third Person POV.
5. Weave Don’t Dump

- Our goal in English III is to work on weaving quote fragments into a single sentence.

- So when we dump a quote, we often create two sentences or more—a run-on.
5. To weave properly, take the “Turney” Test

Years ago, student Turney Maurer (seen below) was struggling with this skill and came in for tutoring. He made a great observation about quote weaving:

“So, when you read a sentence out loud that has a quote woven in it, it should just sound like a regular sentence—like you wouldn’t even know the quote was there.”

Ready! Set! Quote Weave!

Update: Turney is currently working as a technical journalist, so he is probably a quote weaving master.
• From the start, something seems strange about the instructions Harriet is given when she babysits for the Winters, “She would not have to change a diaper, they said. In fact, she would not have to do anything at all” (Weber 7).

Take the Turney Test:
1. Get rid of the quotation marks and all but the last period.
2. See if the sentence reads like a normal sentence—free of clunkiness and run-ons.
From the start, something seems strange about the instructions Harriet is given when she babysits for the Winters. She would not have to change a diaper, they said. In fact, she would not have to do anything at all (Weber 7).

This is a run-on. It’s THREE sentences. The same rules of grammar apply when we weave details. The sentence must be complete—not a run-on—even when it contains a quote.

Take the Turney Test:
1. Get rid of the quotation marks and all but the last period.
2. See if the sentence reads like a normal sentence—free of clunkiness and run-ons.
In the revised version, the direct quotes are woven into one sentence.

**Original Version**

From the start, something seems strange about the instructions Harriet is given when she babysits for the Winters. “She would not have to change a diaper, they said. In fact, she would not have to do anything at all” (Weber 7).

**Revised Version**

When Harriet shows up to babysit, strangely, the Winters instruct her that she will “not have to change a diaper” or “do anything at all” (Weber 7).
Notice that even without the quotation marks, it’s still a grammatically correct single sentence.

**THIS PASSES THE TURNEY TEST!**

*Revised Version*

When Harriet shows up to babysit, strangely, the Winters instruct her that she will not have to change a diaper or do anything at all.
Revised Version

When Harriet shows up to babysit, strangely, the Winters instruct her that she will “not have to change a diaper” or “do anything at all” (Weber 7).

6. Couch your direct quote DETAIL with ELABORATION
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When we use a direct quote, we often need to make sure the reader is clear about…

- **Who** is saying, thinking, or doing this? About **whom** or **what**?
- **What** is happening in the moment? **What has previously occurred** that’s important to understanding the details?
- **Why** is the character saying or thinking this?
- **Where** is this occurring? (setting)
- **When** is this happening? (within the events of the story)
- **Where** is it in the text? (beginning, middle, or end?)
Without **ELABORATION**, our writing—our thinking—is less clear for a reader.

- David judges them as “alone and out of place” (Sedaris 4).
The elaboration in blue adds context. What does the reader now know?

• David judges the Tomkey children as “alone and out of place” (Sedaris 4).
The elaboration in blue adds what kind of context?

• Because they showed up in their homemade costumes the day after Halloween, David judges the Tomkey children as “alone and out of place” (Sedaris 4).

WHY and AFTER WHAT HAPPENED?
The elaboration in blue adds what kind of context?

- Because they showed up at his front door in their homemade costumes the day after Halloween, David judges the Tomkey children as “alone and out of place” (Sedaris 4).
The elaboration in blue adds what kind of context?

- Towards the end of the story, because they showed up at his front door in their homemade costumes the day after Halloween, David judges the Tomkey children as “alone and out of place” (Sedaris 4).
QUOTE WEAVING PRACTICE

• The narrator makes a prediction. “I’ll be curled up and crying by the rhododendron bush” (Monks 18).

• Complete the half sheet practice and improve this attempted quote weave.

1) This quote is dumped not woven. It doesn’t pass the Turney Test.

2) Maintain third-person POV.

3) This needs more elaboration (paraphrased context – Who/Where/When, etc.) *You may need a set-up sentence before your quote weave sentence.
In one of the final steps of his instructions to the participants, the narrator predicts that by the end of the flash mob, because Deborah will call the police and reject him, he will be “curled up and crying by the rhododendron bush” in her front yard, and they will be free to leave (Monks 18).
You don’t have to do D&E in one sentence. Sometimes we need a sentence of elaboration (paraphrasing, providing context) to set up our sentence with a direct quote.

In one of the final steps of his instructions to the participants, the narrator predicts that Deborah will reject him and call the police. By the end of the event, though he expects to be “curled up and crying by the rhododendron bush” in her front yard, he insists that everyone else can leave (Monks 18).