

*The Art and Craft of Setting Up Quotes/Soundbites:
Avoiding Bland Paraphrases*

1. Use set-ups to introduce a new source and give more info about the source's credentials.

No set-up: Rogan Kersh, a political scientist at Syracuse University, said elections are the way democracies put a check on power. “(Elections) hold people accountable,” Kersh said.

Set-up: Rogan Kersh, a political scientist at Syracuse University, has spent 20 years studying elections and their role in democracy. “They are the way democracies put a check on power,” said Kersh. Elections, he added, “hold people accountable.”

2. Use set-ups to add more info/context with the quote.

No-set-up: John Doe said the explosion was frightening. “It made my dog’s hair stand on end,” said Doe, who was walking his dog near the factory.

Set-up: John Doe was walking his dog near the factory when it exploded. “It made my dog’s hair stand on end,” Doe said.

These examples show another problem: Example A explains the quote AFTER using it. That’s too late. Explain a quote BEFORE using it.

3. Use set-ups to prepare the audience for what’s coming next, what the quote is going to do: argue, suggest, criticize, agree, disagree.

No set-up: Smith said he differs with Jones on the education plan. “I think the plan will hurt students’ chance of learning math,” Smith said.

Set-up: Smith disagreed. “I think the plan will hurt students’ chance of learning math,” Smith said.

No set-up: Kerry said Bush’s plan is “crazy.”

Set-up: Kerry sharply criticized Bush’s plan. “It’s crazy,” Kerry said.

NOTE: You still use SAID with the direct quote.