Quoting Material

What is quoting?

Taking the exact words from an original source is called quoting. You should quote material when you believe the way the original author expresses an idea is the most effective means of communicating the point you want to make. If you want to borrow an idea from an author, but do not need his or her exact words, you should try paraphrasing instead of quoting.

How often should I quote?

Most of the time, paraphrasing and summarizing your sources is sufficient (but remember that you still have to cite them!). If you think it’s important to quote something, an excellent rule of thumb is that for every line you quote, you should have at least two lines analysing it.

How do I incorporate quotations in my paper?

Most of the time, you can just identify a source and quote from it. Sometimes, however, you will need to modify the words or format of the quotation in order to fit in your paper. Whenever you change the original words of your source, you must indicate that you have done so. Otherwise, you would be claiming the original author used words that he or she did not use. But be careful not to change too many words! You could accidentally change the meaning of the quotation, and falsely claim the author said something they did not.

Source: http://www.plagiarism.org/citing-sources/quoting-material/
For example, let's say you want to quote from the following passage in an essay called "United Shareholders of America," by Jacob Weisberg:

The citizen-investor serves his fellow citizens badly by his inclination to withdraw from the community. He tends to serve himself badly as well. He does so by focusing his pursuit of happiness on something that very seldom makes people happy in the way they expect it to.

When you quote, you generally want to be as concise as possible. Keep only the material that is strictly relevant to your own ideas. So here you would not want to quote the middle sentence, since it is repeated again in the more informative last sentence. However, just skipping it would not work -- the final sentence would not make sense without it. So, you have to change the wording a little bit. In order to do so, you will need to use some editing symbols. Your quotation might end up looking like this:

In his essay, “United Shareholders of America,” Jacob Weisberg insists that “The citizen-investor serves his fellow citizens badly by his inclination to withdraw from the community. He tends to serve himself badly... by focusing his pursuit of happiness on something that very seldom makes people happy in the way they expect it to.”

to:

“He tends to serve himself badly...by focusing his pursuit of happiness on [money].”

Source: http://www.plagiarism.org/citing-sources/quoting-material/
The brackets around the word [money] indicate that you have substituted that word for other words the author used. To make a substitution this important, however, you had better be sure that [money] is what the final phrase meant -- if the author intentionally left it ambiguous, you would be significantly altering his meaning. That would make you guilty of fraudulent attribution. In this case, however, the paragraph following the one quoted explains that the author is referring to money, so it is okay.

As a general rule, it is okay to make minor grammatical and stylistic changes to make the quoted material fit in your paper, but it is not okay to significantly alter the structure of the material or its content.

**Quoting Within Quotes**

When you have "embedded quotes," or quotations within quotations, you should switch from the normal quotation marks (""") to single quotation marks (') to show the difference. For example, if an original passage by John Archer reads:

> The Mountain Coyote has been described as a “wily” and “single-minded” predator by zoologist Lma Warner.

your quotation might look like this:

> As John Archer explains, “The Mountain Coyote has been described as a 'wily' and 'single-minded' predator by zoologist Lma Warner.”

Source: http://www.plagiarism.org/citing-sources/quoting-material/