

HOW TO QUOTE in MLA STYLE

Short and Long Quotations, Ellipses, Brackets, Citing

When you directly quote the works of others in your paper, you will format quotations differently depending on their length. Below are some basic guidelines for incorporating quotations into your paper. *Please note that all pages in MLA should be **double-spaced**.*

Short Quotations: To indicate short quotations (fewer than four typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks. Provide the author and specific page citation (in the case of verse, provide line numbers) in the text, and include a complete reference on the Works Cited page. Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation. Question marks and exclamation points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text. For example:

According to some, dreams express "profound aspects of personality"

(Foulkes 184), though others disagree.

According to Foulkes's study, dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (184).

Is it possible that dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184)?

Mark breaks in short quotations of **verse** with a slash, /, at the end of each line of verse: (a space should precede and follow the slash), and line number(s) follow in parentheses.

Cullen concludes, "Of all the things that happened there / That's all I remember" (11-12).

Long Quotations: For quotations that extend to more than four lines of verse or prose: place quotations in a free-standing block of text and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented **one inch** from the left margin; maintain double-spacing. Only indent the first line of the quotation by a half inch if you are citing multiple paragraphs. Your parenthetical citation should come **after** the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks. (You should maintain double-spacing throughout your essay.) For example:

Nelly Dean treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanizes him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Bronte 78)

When citing long sections of poetry, keep formatting as close to the original as possible:

In his poem "My Papa's Waltz," Theodore Roethke explores his childhood with his father:

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.
We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself. (quoted in Shrodes, Finestone, Shugrue 202)

Adding or Omitting Words In Quotations: If you add a word or words in a quotation, you should put brackets around the words to indicate that they are not part of the original text.

Jan Harold Brunvand, in an essay on urban legends, states: "some individuals [who retell urban legends] make a point of learning every rumor or tale" (78).

If you omit a word or words from a quotation, you should indicate the deleted word or words by using ellipsis marks, which are three periods (. . .) preceded and followed by a space. For example:

In an essay on urban legends, Jan Harold Brunvand notes that "some individuals make a point of learning every recent rumor or tale . . . and in a short time a lively exchange of details occurs" (78).

Please note that brackets [] are not needed around ellipses unless adding brackets would clarify your use of ellipses.

When *omitting words from poetry quotations*, use a standard three-period ellipses; however, when *omitting one or more full lines of poetry*, space several periods to about the length of a complete line in the poem:

These beauteous forms, Through a long absence, have not been to me As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:

..... (use ellipses to show lines are omitted)

Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart; And passing even into my purer mind,

With tranquil restoration: . . . (22-24, 28-30)

Quotations must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author.

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly.

Summarizing involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material.

A paraphrase is . . .

- Your own rendition of essential information and ideas expressed by someone else, presented in a new form.
- One legitimate way (when accompanied by accurate documentation) to borrow from a source.
- A more detailed restatement than a summary, which focuses concisely on a single main idea.

Some examples to compare ~

The original passage:

Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Lester, James D. *Writing Research Papers*. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

A legitimate paraphrase:

In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

An acceptable summary:

Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).