

How to Use and Format Quotations following MLA recommendations

When you directly quote the works of others in your paper, you will format quotations differently depending on their length.

1. 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:

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

2. Long Quotations

Place quotations **longer than four typed lines** 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)

Poetry will be handled something like this:

In her poem "Sources," Adrienne Rich explores the roles of women in shaping
their world:

The faithful drudging child
the child at the oak desk whose penmanship,
hard work, style will win her prizes
becomes the woman with a mission, not to win prizes
but to change the laws of history. (23)

3. 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).

(Adapted from The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers by Joseph Gibaldi)

Note:

This handout has been retrieved from the Writing Lab & OWL Web site at Purdue University. It has been
slightly adapted to meet the needs/ objectives of the lecture. For more information:
<http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/> or Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, The
Modern Language Association of America.