

## MLA-style Quotations

### Use quotations like salt

Most of your paper will consist of summaries and paraphrases of what you have read. (This demonstrates you have actually read and understood your sources.) Limit your quotations to situations where the original author's words are particularly memorable or well-expressed, or when the author writes something complex or controversial that would be difficult to paraphrase.

### Weave quotations into your text

Don't just dump quotations in randomly, like raisins in a bagel. There are several ways to incorporate quotations into your paper.

Put the quotation in context. Formal statements and independent clauses are typically followed by a colon:

Lester Folsom (92) has no patience with writers who quote too much: "You end up with word salad---too many things thrown in that don't go together."

Quotations are often preceded by signal phrases or signal verbs:

As Huck says,  
Smith writes that

The English language is unusually rich in synonyms and near-synonyms. Practice using less common words in your signal phrases. Instead of Smith writes or Jones says, consider:

acknowledges	endorses	emphasizes	confesses
compares	observes	admits	illustrates
agrees	denies	confirms	refutes
implies	suggests	asserts	infers
claims	proposes	disputes	rejects

According to Lester Folsom,

The narrator suggests that

Although Taylor (27-8) claims that [blah blah], Friedkin disagrees: [blah blah] (94).

Often it is more effective to partially quote a source, using the most memorable words or phrases:

Lincoln pledged to reconcile the war-torn nation "with malice towards none, with charity for all" (qtd. in Sandburg 481).

If you partially quote, make sure the resulting sentence is complete and grammatical.

**NOT:** Lincoln pledged the war-torn nation "with malice towards none, with charity for all" (qtd. in Sandburg 481).

### **Parenthetical Citation**

The Works Cited list at the end of your paper contains complete bibliographic information about your sources. In the text of the paper, you refer the reader to the Works Cited list with brief parenthetical citations.

After a quotation or paraphrase, put the author's last name in parentheses, followed by the page number(s) where you got the information. Commas, periods, and other punctuation come after the close parenthesis.

"The Internet made a lot of things very simple. Bibliographies aren't among them" (Kronholz A1).

If you included the author's name when introducing the quotation or paraphrase, you don't need to repeat it. Simply provide the appropriate page number(s) in parentheses. Either of the following methods is acceptable:

According to Kronholz, "The Internet made a lot of things very simple. Bibliographies aren't among them" (A1).

According to Kronholz (A1), "The Internet made a lot of things very simple. Bibliographies aren't among them."

### **Modifying Quotations:**

Normally you quote using the author's exact words. There are several occasions when you might wish to modify the quotation.

1. If the quotation is very long, you can shorten it by replacing unnecessary words or phrases with three periods, known as ellipsis. Placing square brackets around the ellipsis, for example [. . .], makes it clear that you have eliminated something. See the example above, under "Block Quotations."
2. Sometimes when you quote, you must insert a word or two to clarify the quotation or to make it grammatically correct:

Nurse Rosanna recalls that "while she [Dolan's sister] spoke she reached for the silver locket around her neck" (Rimini 384).

3. **Rare:** If you want to emphasize particular words or phrases within a quotation, use italics and then in square brackets write [emphasis added]. For example,

Gorn doesn't pull any punches with regard to Ambrose's mistakes:

Not only does his [Ambrose's] practice violate universally accepted canons of historical scholarship, but *most professors would routinely fail any student who so casually adopted it.*  
[emphasis added] (B10)

You would not put [emphasis added] if the original text was italicized. In fact, if the source you are quoting does include bold or italic text, it is best to put [emphasis in the original] to make sure the reader knows you didn't add any.

In general, it is best to let the source speak for itself.

**Quotations Within Quotations:**

Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

As George Carlin sarcastically observes, "a 'compassionate conservative' apparently believes any church that wants to open a soup kitchen should be allowed to" (B8).

**Citing Indirect Sources:**

Sometimes the article you are reading quotes another article. If you quote someone else's quotation, it should be noted in your parenthetical citation:

In his seminal 1893 essay, Frederick Jackson Turner seemed melancholy when he observed, "The closing of the frontier signalled the end of an era in American history" (qtd. in Worster 549)

The Works Cited entry corresponding to this last example might look like this:

Worster, Donald L., Patricia Limerick, and Rebecca Hartshorn. *The West of the Imagination*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 1974.

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URL: <http://library.spokanefalls.edu/guides/quotingMLAstyle.stm>

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