How to Quote | Citation Examples in APA, MLA & Chicago

Published on November 13, 2020 by [Shona McCombes](#). Revised on September 20, 2021.

Quoting means copying a passage of someone else's words and crediting the source. To quote a source, you must ensure:

- The quoted text is enclosed in [quotation marks](#) or formatted as a [block quote](#).
- The original author is correctly cited.
- The text is identical to the original.

The exact format of a quote depends on how long it is and which [citation style](#) you are using. Quoting and citing correctly is essential to [avoid plagiarism](#).

Example of a quote"As natural selection acts solely by accumulating slight, successive, favourable variations, it can produce no great or sudden modification; it can act only by very short and slow steps" (Darwin, 1859, p. 510).

Table of contents

How to cite a quote in APA, MLA and Chicago

Every time you quote, you must [cite the source correctly](#). This looks slightly different depending on the citation style you're using. Three of the most common styles are [APA](#), [MLA](#), and [Chicago](#).

Citing a quote in APA Style

To [cite a direct quote in APA](), you must include the author's last name, the year, and a page number, all separated by commas. If the quote appears on a single page, use "p."; if it spans a page range, use "pp."

An [APA in-text citation]() can be parenthetical or narrative. In a **parenthetical citation**, you place all the information in parentheses after the quote. In a **narrative citation**, you name the author in your sentence (followed by the year), and place the page number after the quote.

Punctuation marks such as periods and commas are placed after the citation, not within the quotation marks.

Examples: APA in-text citation

- Evolution is a gradual process that "can act only by very short and slow steps" (Darwin, 1859, p. 510).
- Darwin (1859) explains that evolution "can act only by very short and slow steps" (p. 510).

Citing a quote in MLA Style

An [MLA in-text citation]() includes only the author's last name and a page number. As in APA, it can be parenthetical or narrative, and a period (or other punctuation mark) appears after the citation.

Examples: MLA in-text citation

- Evolution is a gradual process that "can act only by very short and slow steps" (Darwin 510).
- Darwin explains that evolution "can act only by very short and slow steps" (510).

Citing a quote in Chicago Style

There are two versions of Chicago Style citation: the author-date system, and the notes and bibliography system.

The **[author-date system]()** looks similar to APA: you include the author, year, and page number in parentheses.

Examples: Chicago author-date citation

- Evolution is a gradual process that "can act only by very short and slow steps" (Darwin 1859, 510).
- Darwin (1859) explains that evolution "can act only by very short and slow steps" (510).

The **notes and bibliography** system uses footnotes to cite sources. A note, indicated by a superscript number placed directly after the quote, specifies the author, title, and page number—or sometimes fuller information.

Unlike with parenthetical citations, in this style, the period or other punctuation mark should appear within the quotation marks, followed by the footnote number.

Example: Chicago footnote citationEvolution is a gradual process that "can act only by very short and slow steps."[1]

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1. Darwin, *The Origin of the Species*, 510.

In all styles, you also need to list all the sources you cited at the end of your paper. The requirements for formatting this list vary by citation style.

Block quotes

If you quote more than a few lines from a source, you must format it as a block quote. Instead of using quotation marks, you set the quote on a new line and indent it so that it forms a separate block of text.

Citation style	When to block quote
APA	• Quotes longer than 40 words
MLA	• Quotes of prose longer than four lines • Quotes of poetry/verse longer than three lines
Chicago	• Quotes longer than 100 words

Block quoting is most common in literary analysis, where detailed analysis of the original text requires you to quote at length.

Block quotes are cited the same as regular quotes, except that if the quote ends with a period, the citation appears **after** the period.

Example: MLA block quoteTolkien favours long sentences and detailed descriptions:

To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, a walking-stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out; leaving his second breakfast half-finished and quite unwashed-up, pushing his keys into Gandalf's hands, and running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, across The Water, and then on for a mile or more. (16)

Introducing quotes

Avoid including quotations as entire stand-alone sentences. Each time you quote, you must introduce it in your own words. This shows the reader why you're including the quote and how it relates to your argument.

There are three main strategies you can use to introduce quotes in a grammatically correct way. The following examples use APA Style citations, but these strategies can be used in all styles.

Introductory sentence

Introduce the quote with a full sentence followed by a colon.

If you name the author in your sentence, you may use present-tense verbs, such as *states*, *argues*, *explains*, *writes*, or *reports*, to describe the content of the quote.

- In Denmark, a recent poll shows that support for the EU has grown since the Brexit vote: "A membership referendum held today would be backed by 55 percent of Danish voters" (Levring, 2018, p. 3).
- Levring (2018) reports that support for the EU has grown since the Brexit vote: "A membership referendum held today would be backed by 55 percent of Danish voters" (p. 3).

Introductory signal phrase

Use a signal phrase that mentions the author or source, but doesn't form a full sentence. In this case, you follow the phrase with a comma instead of a colon.

- According to a recent poll, "A membership referendum held today would be backed by 55 percent of Danish voters" (Levring, 2018, p. 3).
- As Levring (2018) explains, "A membership referendum held today would be backed by 55 percent of Danish voters" (p. 3).

Integrated into your own sentence

To quote a phrase that doesn't form a full sentence, you can also integrate it as part of your sentence.

- A recent poll suggests that EU membership "would be backed by 55 percent of Danish voters" in a referendum (Levring, 2018, p. 3).
- Levring (2018) reports that EU membership "would be backed by 55 percent of Danish voters" in a referendum (p. 3).

Shortening a quote

If some parts of a passage are redundant or irrelevant, you can shorten the quote by removing words, phrases, or sentences and replacing them with three dots, called an ellipsis. Most style guides specify that there should be a space before, after, and between each of the dots.

When you shorten a quote, be careful that removing the words doesn't change the meaning. The ellipsis indicates that some text has been removed, but the shortened quote should still accurately represent the author's point.

Example: Using ellipsis to shorten a quoteAs Darwin (1859) puts it, "natural selection acts solely by accumulating slight, successive, favourable variations . . . it can act only by very short and slow steps" (p. 510).

When should you use quotes?

In academic papers and essays, you should avoid relying too heavily on quotes. When you want to refer to information or ideas from a source, it's often best to paraphrase, which means putting the passage in your own words. This shows that you have fully understood the text and ensures your own voice is dominant.

However, there are some situations in which quotes are more appropriate.

When focusing on language

If you want to comment on how the author uses language (for example, in papers about literature, linguistics, communication and media), it is necessary to quote so that the reader can see the exact passage you are referring to.

ExampleYou are writing a paper about the novels of a modernist author. You will have to quote frequently from the novels in order to analyze their language and style.

When giving evidence

To convince the reader of your argument, interpretation or position on a topic, it's often helpful to include quotes that support your point. Quotes from [primary sources](#) (for example, interview transcripts or historical documents) are especially [credible](#) as evidence.

ExampleYou are working on a paper about the causes of a historical event, and you have studied documents and letters written at the time. You can quote from these sources as evidence in support of your argument.

When presenting an author's position or definition

When you're referring to [secondary sources](#) such as scholarly [books](#) and journal articles, the occasional concise quote can be used to present other authors' theories, arguments or ideas. You can quote to show that your point is supported by an authority on the topic, or to critique a position that you disagree with.

Try to put others' ideas in your own words when possible. But if a passage does a great job at expressing, explaining, or defining something, and it would be very difficult to paraphrase without changing the meaning or losing the impact, it could be worth quoting directly.

ExampleYour interpretation of [survey data](#) is supported by a well-known theory on your topic. You find a sentence that perfectly sums up the theory, so you quote the author before elaborating on your understanding of the theory.

How many quotes should you use?

The amount of quotes you should include depends on your subject of study and topic of research.

In scientific subjects, the information itself is more important than how it was expressed, so quotes should generally be kept to a minimum. In the arts and humanities, however, well-chosen quotes are often essential to a good paper.

In social sciences, the amount of quotes you use depends partly on whether you're doing [qualitative or quantitative](#) research. If you're dealing mainly with numbers and statistics, you shouldn't include many quotes, but if you're dealing mainly with words, you will need to quote from the data you collected.

As a general guideline, we recommend that quotes take up no more than 5–10% of your paper. If in doubt, check with your instructor or supervisor how much quoting is appropriate in your field.

The original link：Shona McCombes，How to quote sources. Published on April 11, 2018. Revised on January 31, 2020. https://www.scribbr.com/citing-sources/how-to-quote/