

Quotes and Paraphrases according to MLA style

The following are guidelines for quoting in MLA, but also please check out the Owl Purdue Online Writing Lab website for more specific guidelines!

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>

Rules for citing a source:

Always put the period AFTER the parentheses. Do not put it inside of the quotation.

At the end of the sentence, use the PAGE NUMBER ONLY when the author is mentioned in the context of the sentence or the work cited is evident.

Example: Sizer contends, “Most Americans have an uncomplicated vision of what secondary education ought to be” (114).

At the end of the sentence, use the AUTHOR + PAGE NUMBER when the author is not mentioned or the work needs to be identified. There is no comma between the author and page number.

Example: While there are examples that show the opposite, some people believe that “Americans have an uncomplicated vision of what secondary education ought to be” (Sizer 114).

If you paraphrase, remember that you are expressing the person’s idea in your own language or in a modified version of the person’s language.

Example: At least one other educator has recently quarreled with the traditional division of the curriculum into discrete subjects (Moffett 5).

Integrating or blending quotes:

Remember that you can’t just “quote and run.” You need to explain the significance of the quote and contextualize it within your argument.

Example of an unintegrated/unblended quote that is standing alone:

It is important to understand that positive change does not necessarily occur without human effort. “Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability” (17).

Example of a successfully integrated/blended quote:

It is important to understand that positive change does not necessarily occur without human effort. King proclaimed that “progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability” (17). With these words, King asserts that change may not be easy; it does not “rol[l] in” and it is not predetermined that it will occur at all. King believes that oppressed people must, therefore, initiate change in order to achieve the freedom they desire. This assertion has significance and validity since...

THE GOLDEN RULE: If you quote, comment on the quotation. Let the reader know what you make of it and why you quote it. Pause to explain, analyze, or directly engage a quote.

As Janice Rushing and Thomas Frenz put it in their book Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film, “To survive, a man must be technological, and to thrive, he must be technologically adept” (147). The new heroes cannot “survive” without technology, which counteracts their human weaknesses with cyborg prosthetics that give them an inhuman capacity for human salvation.

** Notice that key words from the quote (“survive”) are used in the explanation or comment on the quotation. When you use an exact word from a quote again, you don’t have to recite author and page number, but you do have to put it in quotes.

Blend quotations into your own sentences. Quotations should never be brought in unless you prepare your reader for them in some way. Signal phrases and verbs also help blend quotes into sentences and alert readers to upcoming quotations.

Signal verbs:

Acknowledges	allows	believes	concludes
Advises	answers	charges	concur
Agrees	asserts	claims	confirms
Criticizes	emphasizes	offers	reveals
Declares	expresses	opposes	says
Describes	interprets	remarks	states
Disagrees	lists	replies	suggests
Discusses	objects	reports	thinks
Disputes	observes	responds	writes

The previous signal phrases/verb are good, but sometimes students overuse “the author states” or “the author says.” If you use them too much, they sound artificial, general, and forced. Try instead using stronger, more active, and very specific verbs.

Announces	Entangles	Generates	Hopes
Asserts	Foretells	Hammers	Impugns
Answers	Gushes	Impoverishes	Lambasts
Argues	Immortalizes	Labors	Longs
Bemoans	Jests	Learns	Masks
Brag	Lavishes	Maligns	Moralizes
Circles	Magnifies	Misappropriates	Obscures
Chastises	Minimizes	Nurtures	Overreacts
Contemplates	Negates	Overlooks	Ponders
Deliberates	Offers	Preempts	Rambles
Denies	Perverts	Preaches	Reminisces
Denounces	Postures	Reinforces	Savors
Discloses	Reconciles	Revokes	Testifies
Repudiates	Retaliates	Sympathizes	withholds
Sentimentalizes	Surpasses	Warns	
Transcends	Valorizes	Foreshadows	
Witnesses	Fabricates	Grapples	

Ways to announce a quote:

Direct Quote:

Lincoln forewarned, “A house divided against itself shall not stand” (212).

- Notice that the signal phrase is followed by a comma and the first letter of the quote is capitalized because it is capitalized in the original.

Direct quote introduced with a colon after an independent clause:

Lincoln expressed this sentiment in a clear statement: “A house divided against itself shall not stand” (212).

- Here the quote is introduced by a complete sentence that sets up the idea in the reader’s mind.
- Again, the first letter of the quote is capitalized since it is capitalized in the original.

Indirect quote with a signal phrase: This is a very good way to blend in quotes!

Lincoln forewarned that “a house divided against itself shall not stand” (212).

- Notice that here there is no comma and no capital letter with the opening of the quote. These are not necessary with an indirect or blended quote.
- Notice that the word “that” connects the signal phrase to the quoted material in an indirect quote.

Fully blended quote (no signal phrase): This is the superior way to blend in quotes!

A nation in the middle of the civil war is “a house divided against itself” (Lincoln 212).

- Notice that the quote is completely blended into the writer’s sentence structure, and no signal phrase is used.

Block Quote: Any quote of four or more lines long should be incorporated into the essay in block form.

In his latest book, *Author Unknown: On the Trail of Anonymous*, an account of his "second career" as a literary sleuth, Foster explains one of the fundamental warrants for his analyses:

I venture to say that no two individuals write exactly the same way, using the same words in the same combinations, or with the same patterns of spelling and punctuation. No two adults in the same family (or corporation or motorcycle gang) have read the same books. No one writes consistently fluent sentences. It is that pattern of difference in each writer's use of language, and the repetition of distinguishing traits, that make it possible for a text analyst to discover the authorship of anonymous, pseudonymous, or forged documents. (5)

As Foster explains throughout *Author Unknown*, we are what we read when we write. Foster's innovation was to test this claim by generating statistical representations of Shakespeare's language use, and then to compare the *Elegy* to those representations.

- The block quote means that you separate out and indent a quote.
- Remember to indent the whole block.
- No quotation marks are required around the quote.

- The block quote should be introduced, not just inserted in the paper.
- If you choose to cite a quote that is this long, you must be sure to pause and really dig into and analyze this quote. If it's this important to cite as a block quote, then you should have much to say about this quote!

Other reminders:

Essays and book chapters are put in quotation marks ("A Real Meritocracy"), **not** italicized or underlined.

Books, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, plays, novels, and other titles of works are italicized or underlined (e.g. *MLA Handbook*).

Indirect quotations: If you use a quotation from person A that you obtained from a book or article written by person B, or you paraphrase such a quotation, put "qtd. in" before the name of the publication's author in the parenthetical reference.

Ex: Rudolph Giuliani favors the death penalty for "the murder of a law-enforcement officer, mass murder, a particularly heinous killing" but would impose it only "when there is certainty of guilt well beyond a reasonable doubt" (qtd. in Klein 37).

Quotation within Short Quotation:

Ex: The report further stated, "All great writing styles have their wellsprings in the personality of the writer. As Buffon said, 'The style is the man'" (Duncan 49).

Indicating Changes in the Quote: Indicate changes in the body of your quotes with brackets ([]) and omissions with an ellipsis (. . .). Ellipses are three spaced periods you use when you want to omit something from the quotation that is not essential to your point. Ellipses needn't go at the beginning or the end of a quote. Whether your quotation is long or short, you will often need to change some of the material in it to conform to your own sentence requirements. Don't be afraid to make changes – they are necessary for blending effectively; however, you can't alter the content of the quote or add in words the author never intended. You can use the brackets for tense changes, pronoun changes, etc.

Ex #1: In the "Tintern Abbey Lines," Wordsworth refers to a trance-like state, in which the "affections gently lead . . . [him] on" (42-3). He is unquestionably describing the state of extreme relaxation, for he mentions that the "motion of . . . human blood [was] / Almost suspended" (44-7) and that in these states he considered himself to be "a living soul" (49).

Notice that in the example, "me" has been changed to "[him]" and "[was]" has been added to keep the flow of the sentence.

Ex. #2: 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. Do this only if it's necessary to make the quote better. Do this sparingly.

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).

Ex. #3: If you are changing the tense from past to present so that it better fits the flow of your sentence, then you only need to change the ending. If you are going from "made" to "make" then you put "ma[ke]" or from "walked" to "walking," then you put "walk[ing]"