

Using Quotations Properly

Carefully chosen quotations from a novel, short story, play, poem, or research source make your generalizations specific. Always support a point you make in your own writing with a quotation, which is anything you copy from a literary selection. A quotation can be part of a story's narration, dialogue from a novel, short story, play, or a line of poetry. The passage becomes a quotation when you enclose it in quotation marks in your paragraph. Never let a quotation "float" in the paragraph; include it in a sentence or make a smooth transition by introducing the quotation with your own words.

1. If the quotation is only a phrase or a clause, and can be correctly integrated into your sentence, do not set it off by commas or begin it with a capital letter:

- Juliet expresses the depth of despair when she laments that her situation is "past hope, past cure, past help" (4.1.94-95).
- At the beginning of his imprisonment, the prisoner "suffered terribly from loneliness and boredom" (21).

2. A quotation that is one or more complete sentences should begin with a capital letter, and should either be preceded by an appropriate introductory phrase, followed by a comma, or be separated from the previous sentence by a colon:

- After killing Tybalt, Romeo cries, "Oh, I am fortune's fool!" (2.2.118).
- As soon as Jack paints his face for hunting, he becomes more like a wild animal than a rational human being: "He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling" (58).

3. If you decide that it is unnecessary to include all the words of the author you are quoting, use an ellipsis (three spaced dots), enclosed in brackets [""], to let your reader know that you have left something out. Do not omit key words that are the basis of your quotation analysis:

- Showing contempt for humanity, the lawyer charges, "You take falsehood for truth [""]" (31).

4. If the quotation is relatively long - runs to more than four lines in your paper - it should be set off from your text by indenting it one inch (10 spaces) from the left margin, it should be double-spaced, and it should not include quotation marks. The citation then comes after the quotation's end mark:

The lawyer's physical appearance shows the devastating effects of his imprisonment: Before the table sat a man, unlike an ordinary human being. It was a skeleton with tight-drawn skin, with long curly hair like a woman's, and a shaggy beard. The color of his face was yellow, of an earthy shade; the cheeks were sunken, and the hand upon which he leaned his hairy head was so lean and skinny that it was painful to look upon. (270)

5. If you quote two or more lines of poetry, use a slash to mark the end of each line:

Foreseeing evil, Juliet says, "Oh, God! I have an ill-divining soul./ Methinks I see thee, now

thou art so low,/As one dead in the bottom of a tomb" (3.4.11). **6. Dialogue: If you are quoting dialogue in a play, the quotation should be set off from your text with the appropriate character's name indented one inch (10 spaces) from the left margin, written in all capital letters, and followed by a period. All subsequent lines in that character's speech should be indented an additional quarter inch (3 spaces):**

Abigail's deceitful and malicious actions against Elizabeth trigger Proctor to threaten Abigail:
PROCTOR. If you do not free my wife tomorrow, I am set and bound to ruin you, Abby.
ABIGAIL. How - ruin me? (157) **Dialogue in a novel or short story should be enclosed in single quotation marks:**

" 'That cursed be,' murmured the old man clutching his hand in despair" (90). **If you are quoting dialogue from a novel, it is best not to quote more than one character's conversation without your own words of explanation in between, to clarify which character is speaking:**

Ralph's remorse over Simon's death, and his realization of the newfound savagery on the island is clear when he tells Piggy, "That was murder," the morning after the night of the feast (144). However, Piggy's desperate need to keep order on the uncivilized island is also clear when he responds to Ralph by saying, "'You stop it!' said Piggy shrilly. 'What good're you doing talking like that?'" (144) **7. Use brackets if you need to change a word in a quotation to add information in order to explain a confusing reference, or to keep a sentence grammatical in your context:**

- Berlin's objective is "[to] live long enough to establish goals worth living for ["]" (26).
- Smith states that, "The study of Shakespeare by Harold Bloom [a noted literary scholar and critic] reaches far beyond the college classroom" (46).

8. Citing quotations:

The citation is the exact location of the quotation in the text, enclosed in parentheses. The citation is the numbers only, with no further information, such as "page" or "pg."

- Short story and novel: page number(s) (58)
- Poetry: Line number(s) (10)
- Play: Act, scene, and line number(s), each followed by a period (3.5.22-25)

9. Managing punctuation with citations:

Citations become part of your writing, and, as such, must be grammatically correct; furthermore, you must preserve the original grammatical structure of the quotation:

- Periods: In quotations that end with a period, you must place (relocate) the period after the citation. Do not put a period both at the end of the quotation, and after the citation.
- Question marks and exclamation marks: When the quotation is a question or an exclamation, keep the end marks inside the quotation marks, then place the citation after the quotation. No further end marks are needed after the citation.