

## #4) Integrating Quotations ~ Guidelines and MLA style

Including quoted material can be an effective way to enliven your own writing. But beware. You must use quoted material sparingly. The overuse of quotations can drown out your voice and leave the reader wondering what happened to you—the writer. Remember, that's *your* name at the top of the paper! The purpose of this handout is to establish the appropriate occasions for using quoted material, to demonstrate the techniques for integrating quotations into your own text, and to identify some of the MLA guidelines for executing quotations.

**When to Quote** (from *Writing and Reading across the Curriculum*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, Behrens and Rosen)

### 1) Memorable Language

Use quotations when the author of your source material turns a phrase, sentence, or passage of particularly powerful, vivid, or memorable language.

### 2) Clear and Concise Language

Use quotations when the language in your source material is so clear and economical that to attempt a paraphrase would be ineffective.

### 3) Authoritative Language

Use quotations when you want to lend the authority and credibility of experts or prominent figures to your writing. If you are writing to persuade, quotations from authoritative sources can be especially useful in supporting your argument. Quotations can demonstrate to readers that your perspective on an issue has been developed through careful study and consideration of the opinions of credible figures in your field.

Of course, one quotation might include all three of the above—a concise and powerful remark from a prominent figure.

## How to Integrate Quotations

Quotations should be integrated into your own sentences. Don't drop quotations into your text without warning, and avoid standing quotations alone as sentences; instead, provide clear signal phrases, which include the author's name, to prepare readers for the quotation:

Although the bald eagle is still listed as endangered, the species has recovered numbers. According to ornithologist Jay Sheppard, "The bald eagle seems to have stabilized its population, at the very least, almost everywhere" (96).

The following examples demonstrate ways to vary your signal phrases:

In the words of author and activist Rick Bass, "...

As Flora Davis has noted, "...

The Gardners, experts in Colorado Plateau archaeology, point out that "...

Psychologist Sidney McMaynerberry offers an odd argument for this theory: "...

Use active verbs in signal phrases to indicate the author's tone and stance. Is your source arguing a point, making an observation, reporting a fact, drawing a conclusion, refuting an argument, or stating a belief? Choose an appropriate verb, such as one from the following list, to make the author's stance more clear:

acknowledges	comments	describes	maintains	reports
adds	compares	disputes	notes	responds
admits	concedes	emphasizes	observes	shows
agrees	confirms	endorses	points out	states
argues	contends	illustrates	reasons	suggests
asserts	declares	implies	refutes	summarizes
claims	denies	insists	rejects	writes

## MLA Quotation Conventions

### 1) Quoting Prose

For prose quotations of less than four lines, place quoted language in quotation marks and incorporate it into your text (If your document requires parenthetical citation, place the period after the parentheses):

But as the condemned man and his executioners approach the gallows, the prisoner steps slightly aside to avoid a puddle, and Orwell observes, "It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man" (47).

For variety, you can also divide the quotation by working the signal phrase into the middle of the sentence:

"It is curious," Orwell notes, as the hanging party approaches the gallows and the prisoner steps slightly aside to avoid a puddle, "but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man" (47).

Or, you can work parts (key words or phrases) of the original quotation into your sentence:

Orwell finds it "curious" that until his close involvement in the hanging of a Burmese prisoner he "had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man" (47).

For longer quotations (more than four lines of your own paper), set the passage off from your text by starting a new line indented one inch, and do not add quotation marks (parenthetical citation *follows* period):

Orwell describes the prisoner not as a dying man but as a man robustly alive:

All the organs of his body were working—bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming—all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live. His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned—reasoned even about puddles. (47)

### 2) Ellipsis

When you wish to omit a portion of the original quoted language, you must use ellipsis points (a sequence of three spaced periods) to signal to the reader that you have edited the original.

Ellipsis points may come in the middle of a sentence:

In his essay "A Hanging," Orwell laments the "unspeakable wrongness" of taking the life of another human. As the prisoner is marched to the gallows, Orwell reports, "All the organs of his body were working . . . all toiling away in solemn foolery" (47).

Or, if you have edited out the end of a longer sentence, place ellipsis points at the end, and add a fourth point, which is your normal sentence-ending period:

In his essay "A Hanging," Orwell laments the "unspeakable wrongness" of taking the life of another human. As the prisoner is marched to the gallows, Orwell reports, "His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned . . . ."

If your ellipsis points come at the end and you have a parenthetical citation, place the period after parentheses:

In his essay "A Hanging," Orwell laments the "unspeakable wrongness" of taking the life of another human. As the prisoner is marched to the gallows, Orwell reports, "His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned . . ." (47).

**\*\*Note:** Some instructors prefer that you put *all* of your ellipsis points in brackets to distinguish your ellipses from the author's ellipses, but the MLA no longer requires that you use brackets in all cases. The MLA requires that you use brackets only when your quotation contains both an ellipsis of the author *and* an ellipsis of your own—a rare event. Take care to understand your instructor's expectations.