

HOW TO USE QUOTATIONS

Using quotations is a great way to support your thesis. Once you have selected passages that support your ideas, be sure that you properly integrate and format your citations.

1. CHOOSE YOUR QUOTE

Be sure to accurately represent the speaker's meaning.

- Don't say that the author said the movie was "great" if the author originally said, "The movie was not great."

Be succinct! Use the shortest section of a quoted passage that you can to make your point.

- Too long: In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Aunt Polly reveals her conflicted feelings about how to raise Tom when she says, "**Spare the rod and spile the child, as the Good Book says. I'm a laying up sin and suffering for us both, I know. He's full of the Old Scratch, but laws-a-me! He's my own dead sister's boy, poor thing, and I ain't got the heart to lash him, somehow. Every time I let him off, my conscience does hurt me so, and every time I hit him my old heart most breaks. Well-a-well, man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble, as the Scripture says, and I reckon it's so. He'll play hookey this evening**" (Twain 74).
- Shorter quote: In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Aunt Polly reveals her conflicted feelings about how to raise Tom when she says, "**Every time I let him off, my conscience does hurt me so, and every time I hit him my old heart most breaks**" (Twain 74).

2. INTEGRATE YOUR QUOTATION IN ONE OF THREE ACCEPTABLE WAYS:

- Method 1: Use a phrase that lets the reader know who is speaking plus a **comma**.
 - McGain remembers the chant, "Bryce, Bryce, your bowling's quite nice, they're gonna need some batting advice" (222).
 - "I was meant to be a composer and will be I'm sure. Don't ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football - please," Barber said (56).
- Method 2: Use an independent clause that refers to what happens in the quotation plus a **colon**.
 - Scientists agree that the theory holds true so far: "These data support our hypothesis" (Mungawa et. al 7).
 - Garcia criticizes Leland's logic: "Leland ignores one critical alternative explanation" (para. 12).
 - Shelley held a bold view: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (794).
- Method 3: Integrate a quoted phrase into your sentence. In this case, you do not need to add any extra punctuation between your words and the quote.
 - Elia claims no impartiality and agrees he is "not the right person to make this decision."
 - Brown obstinately believes that "all errors of this type are unacceptable."

3. EXPLAIN THE QUOTATION, OR ELSE YOUR READER WON'T KNOW WHY YOU USED IT. FOR EVERY LINE YOU QUOTE, EXPECT TO WRITE AT LEAST TWO SENTENCES OF YOUR OWN ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION AFTERWARDS.

- In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Aunt Polly reveals her conflicted feelings about how to raise Tom when she says, “Every time I let him off, my conscience does hurt me so, and every time I hit him my old heart most breaks” (Twain 74). **Conventions of 19th century American society dictated that one must beat or spank children to teach them lessons, but throughout his novel Twain reveals Aunt Polly’s anxiety about physically abusing Tom.**
- Ask yourself, “How does this quotation relate to my thesis?”

4. PUNCTUATE YOUR QUOTATION CORRECTLY.

Use the author’s special punctuation (e.g., question marks), but maintain the capitalization and periods of your own writing. In MLA format, the period goes after the parenthetical reference.

- “How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe . . . ?” wonders the doctor in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (42).
- Dorothea Brooke responds to her sister, “What a wonderful little almanac you are, Celia!” (7).

If you choose to add special punctuation to comment on a passage you are quoting, put the special punctuation outside of the quotation marks.

- He attacked “taxation without representation” (32).
- Did he attack “taxation without representation” (32)?
- What dramatic events followed his attack on “taxation without representation” (32)!

Use single quotation marks to indicate quoted dialogue or text within a quoted passage.

- “Read ‘Kubla Khan,’” he told me.

If you remove words from a quote that you cite, replace the words with an ellipsis: 3 periods with a space between each. If the ellipsis falls at the end of a quotation, omit the first space.

- Tuchman writes, “Medical thinking . . . stressed air as the communicator of disease, ignoring sanitation or visible carriers” (101-02).
- Tuchman writes, “Medical thinking, trapped in a theory of astral influences, stressed air as the communicator of disease. . .” (101-02).

Use “block quotes” if the quotation is more than four lines in your paper.

- Introduce the quote with a colon, indent each line two tabs’ length, and do not use quotation marks. If you are using MLA format, include the parenthetical reference outside of the final punctuation.
 - At the conclusion of *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph realizes the horror of his actions:

The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to the now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)