

Formatting Quotes (in MLA format)



Quotes are extremely useful tools for papers. They are a great way to support your main ideas and relate your thesis to the text. There are many different rules about formatting quotes that are important to remember while writing a paper.

The main rule is that it is important to always introduce your quotes and add your analysis. Typically, this should be within the same sentence. For example:

In *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien emphasizes the importance of loyalty as he states, “Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens” (274).

-OR-

Tolkien exclaims that, “Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens,” emphasizing the importance of loyalty among a group of people (274).

Notice that the period comes at the end of the entire sentence, including the citation, instead of within the quotation. However, if you are quoting something that does not require a citation (i.e. if you already cited the quote before hand), then the period goes within the quotation marks:

It can be assumed that Tolkien looks down upon those who leave because he uses words such as “Faithless.”

Not introducing the quote or following it with an explanation of its importance would make it a “dropped quote.” This quote is very sad and lonely because it has been abandoned in the middle of the essay without any context and, therefore, appears to be randomly thrown in.

Block Quotes:

When dealing with a long quote (i.e. a quote that takes up 3 or more lines of the paper) a block quote becomes necessary. To introduce this quote, try to use a full, complete sentence with at least one subject and verb and end it with a colon:

Captain Wentworth demonstrates the depths of his love within his hastily written letter:

I can listen no longer in silence. I must speak to you by such means as are within my reach. You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope. Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone forever. I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own than when you almost broke it, eight and a half years ago. (Austen 240)

When using a block quote, no quotation marks are needed and the period comes at the end of the quotation, followed by the citation. The whole quote is indented 1 inch from the margin.

Brackets:

If you do not want to use a block quote, a useful tool to use would be the bracket! Brackets are used whenever words need to be skipped or changed within the quote. This way, you can focus purely on what is important or improve the clarity:

The depth of Wentworth's emotions are clear as he states, "I can listen no longer in silence [...] You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope" (Austen 240).

When using a bracket to skip words, always put "... " within the bracket to indicate that words have been skipped. Sometimes, it is necessary to change words within the quote in order to help with the clarity of the sentence. When this happens, you can replace the original word by inserting the new word within the set of brackets. However, when changing words, make sure you do not change the meaning of the original text:

Wentworth demonstrates his love to Anne as he admits that his heart belongs to her "even more [...] than when [she] almost broke it, eight and a half years ago" (Austen 240).

Because the quote has been used in reference to how he felt about Anne, "you" has been changed to "she". This way, the sentence still makes perfect sense. This should not be done often when writing essays; only use it when it is absolutely needed to improve the clarity and be sure to only change one or two words at a time.

Quoting Within a Quote:

Many times, when using quotations in a paper, the original text will include quotation marks, indicating a character speaking. Instead of typing the double quotation marks again, use only the single quotation mark:

In A Delicate Dependency, Talbot illustrates Niccolo's sudden mood shift: "He turned to me and his expression became utterly serious. 'No!' he snapped" (31).

These basic rules will help strengthen your essay immensely! And remember to always quote phrases exactly as they appear in the text (unless using brackets!), introduce your quote, and provide analysis. Also, be sure that your quotes are relevant to your paper! ☺

Works Cited

Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003. Print.

"Integration of Quotes." *Academics*. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Nov. 2013.

"MLA Formatting Quotes." *Purdue Owl*. Purdue University, 4 Apr. 2013. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.

"Step 9a: Citation." *Ten Steps to Writing an Essay*. American University in Cairo, Aug. 2004. Web. 9 Nov. 2013.

Talbot, Michael. *The Delicate Dependency: A Novel of the Vampire Life* New York: Avon, 1982. Print.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Lord of the Rings* New York: Harper Collins, 1994. Print.

"The Writer's Handbook: How to Use Literary Quotations." *The Writing Center*. U of Wisconsin, 2 July 2012. Web. 9 Nov. 2013.

