

Correct Form and Effective Use of Quotations

General Guidelines

Most of you are English majors and hopefully use quotations to support claims you make in your papers. Knowing when and how to use quotations will make your use of them much more effective.

* Quote only words, phrases, lines, and passages that are particularly interesting, vivid, or apt, and keep all quotations as brief as possible. Over-quotation can bore your readers and might lead them to conclude that you are neither an original thinker nor a skillful writer.

*The accuracy of quotations is extremely important. They must reproduce the original source exactly. Unless indicated in brackets, changes must not be made in the spelling, capitalization, or interior punctuation of the source.

*You must construct a clear, grammatically correct sentence that allows you to introduce or incorporate a quotation with complete accuracy.

Quoting from *Paradise Lost*

*If you quote part or all of a single line of verse that does not require special emphasis, put it in quotation marks within your text:

Satan asserts his views on being cast into hell: "Better to reign in hell than serve in heav'n" (1.263).

*You may also incorporate two or three lines in this way, using a slash with a space on each side to separate them:

Milton writes *Paradise Lost* so that he "may assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men" (1.25-26).

*Verse quotations of more than three lines should begin on a new line. Indent each line one inch from the left margin and (when you write your final paper, but not for your exercises) double-space between each line, adding no quotation marks that do not appear in the original. A parenthetical reference for a verse quotation set off from the text follows the last line of the quotation:

Milton ends Book XII of *Paradise Lost* with a hopeful look towards the future:

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way. (12.645-649)

*After your quotation, refer to both the book number and the line number. First cite the book number, followed by a period; then cite the line number(s). Ex: (1.256); (10.34-37). You do not need extra information like "line #" or "L." or "ll."

Using Ellipses

*The ellipsis mark consists of three period with a space before and after each one. Use an ellipsis mark to indicate that you have deleted material from an otherwise word-for-word quotation:

"I should be much for open war . . . / As not behind in hate" (2.119-120).

In quoted poetry (like *PL*) use a full line of dots to indicate that you have dropped a line or more from the poem:

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind
.....
Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
To that bad eminence. (2.1-2;5)

Effective Integration and Use

Aside from using quotation marks correctly, knowing when and how to use slashes and long quotation form, and properly citing book and line numbers, there are ways to improve the way in which you use quotations.

Effective Integration

- As much as possible, try to blend quotations into your own sentence so that it flows well.
- Avoid mentioning that you are about to quote--this is obvious to the reader.

NO

In the following quote Michael says to Adam "but shall possess / a paradise within thee, happier far" (Book XII, Lines 586-587).

YES

Michael assures Adam that, although he will no longer reside in the Garden of Eden, he "shall possess / a paradise within [him], happier far" (XII.586-87).

OR

Michael assures Adam that, although he may no longer reside in the Garden of Eden, he will "possess" a "happier" "paradise within" his heart, which he can carry wherever he goes (XII. 585, 586).

- Avoid dropping quotations into the text without warning; instead provide a clear signal phrase.

NO

Milton gives a vision of the future in Book XII. "O execrable son so to aspire / Above his brethren, to himself assuming/ Authority usurped, from God not giv'n" (XII.64-66).

YES

In Book XII, Milton's future vision of Nimrod's actions indicates the disorder that the world has fallen to: "O execrable son so to aspire / Above his brethren, to himself assuming/ Authority usurped, from God not giv'n" (XII.64-66).

Effective Use

- You do not need to quote a whole sentence if you only need part of it to make your point.

no

Michael decides to tell Adam about the future rather than showing him:

But I perceived
Thy mortal sight to fail; objects divine
Must needs impair and weary human sense:
Henceforth what is to come I will relate,
Thou therefore give due audience, and attend. (XII. 5-9)

Michael decides to "relate" or tell Adam about the future rather than showing him because he feels that Adam's "mortal sight" is "fail[ing]" (XII. 8, 6).

•When you quote from a text, especially if you are quoting a lengthy piece of the text, you need to work with the quotation rather than letting it speak for itself. Analyze the quotation to demonstrate why it is important to your argument. Make sure that your own words are most prominent.

no

Eve states her willingness to move forward:

In me is no delay; with thee to go,
Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me
Art all things under heav'n, all places though,
Who for my wilful crime art banished hence. (XII. 615-19)

This statement clearly shows how Eve will put her love for Adam above all.

yes

Eve demonstrates her continued dependence on Adam:

In me is no delay; with thee to go,
Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me
Art all things under heav'n, all places though,
Who for my wilful crime art banished hence. (XII. 615-19)

Here Eve suggests that leaving Eden by Adam's side is a paradise in itself. To "go" with him is "to stay here." For Eve, there is no other option *but* to leave with Adam since in him she finds "all things under heaven." Without him, one would assume, she has nothing. The reminder of her "wilful crime" reminds the reader that she is attached to Adam through her sin and therefore must obey God's punishment that she be serve her husband, rendering her utterly dependent and ultimately powerless.

