

Using Quotations Effectively (Adapted from MLA Handbook)

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. For the purposes of this class, try to use correct quotation form as much as possible in your exercises. By the time you write your final paper, I will expect that your form will be perfect.

* 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 periods 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)

*Do not use the ellipsis mark at the beginning of a quotation; do not use it at the end of a quotation unless you have cut some words from the final sentence quoted.