

Quotations: Embedding and Punctuating

Although quotations add strong evidence to your writing, embedding them into sentences correctly is just as important as selecting the right ones to use. Incorporating related punctuation (brackets and ellipses) will not only help get your idea across, but also transition between the quoted text and paragraph more smoothly.

Basic Usage of Quotation Marks

- If the quoted material is a complete sentence, capitalize the first letter of the sentence.
Example: My sister said, “You need to do my homework.”
- If the quoted material is a fragment or a phrase, do not capitalize the first letter.
Example: The phrase “don’t win in practice” is consistent for all sports.
- If the initial quote is vague or unclear, you can add words with the use of brackets to clarify the meaning.
Example: “John thinks that his brother [Jeff] will be a great dad,” said Andrew.
- Use single quotation marks if you are quoting material that has a quote within it.
Example: I said, “My father used to tell me, ‘Always give it your all.’”

Signal Phrases

Signal phrases are key for embedding quotations—they introduce the quote’s source, the person who said the quotation, or both. Signal phrases are bolded in examples throughout this handout.

<i>Some Signal Phrases to Use</i>		
according to	claims	points out
discusses	proposes	notes
states	writes	demonstrates
argues	explains	says

Strategies for Embedding Quotations

There are three strategies you can use to embed quotations: setting off quotations, building in quotations, or introducing quotations with a colon.

Setting off Quotations

Quotations are set off from the sentence by adding a comma.

Examples of Setting off Quotations

- As Jane Smith **explains**, “A duck’s quack doesn’t echo.”
- “Cheese is the most stolen food in the world,” **according to** Jane Smith.
- In the article, Jane Smith **writes**, “Snails can sleep for three years without eating.”
- “Dolphins,” as Jane Smith **notes**, “have highly developed emotion centers in their brains.”

Building in Quotations

Unlike set-off quotations, built-in quotations are built seamlessly into a sentence, and often use the word “that” along with a signal phrase.

Examples of Building In Quotations

- Regarding animal sleeping habits, Jane Smith **states that** “dolphins sleep with one eye open.”
- Jane Smith **points out** in her article about the sun that “only 55% of all Americans know that the sun is a star.”

Introducing Quotations with a Colon

For this strategy, a complete sentence provides initial context about the quotation before following with a colon and the actual quote.

Examples of Introducing Quotes with a Colon

- In her book about pets, Jane Smith **discusses** the benefits of owning a dog: “Dog owners are less likely to experience depression and high levels of stress than people who do not own dogs.”
- Jane Smith **argues** that there are many good reasons for consuming dark chocolate: “Dark chocolate contains antioxidants, lowers blood pressure, and is high in vitamins and minerals.”

Common Errors when Embedding Quotations

Ambiguous Pronouns

Make sure the name of the person who said the quote is not in an introductory phrase, but part of the subject. The subject of the sentence should use the name of the person who said the quote.

Incorrect: In Jane Smith’s book about pets, *she* claims that “people who own dogs experience lower levels of stress.”

Correct: In her book about pets, *Jane Smith* claims that “people who own dogs experience lower levels of stress.”

Floating Quotations

Quoted material must be connected to your own writing. No sentences should be composed entirely of a quotation, or the reader may find it difficult to connect the quotation to the point one wishes to make in the paragraph.

Incorrect: Jane Smith states that there are many good reasons to eat dark chocolate. “Dark chocolate contains many antioxidants.”

Correct: Jane Smith states that there are many good reasons to eat dark chocolate, including that “dark chocolate contains many antioxidants.”

Correct: Jane Smith states that eating dark chocolate is good for one’s health. For instance, “Dark chocolate contains many antioxidants.”

Punctuating Quotations

General

Commas and periods go inside quotation marks unless a parenthetical citation follows.

- Lauren said, "The beach is hot and humid."
- Lauren said, "The beach is hot and humid" (16).

Question marks and exclamation points go inside closing quotation marks in certain contexts. If the punctuation is part of the quoted material, the punctuation goes inside. Otherwise, it belongs outside the quotation marks.

- Have you heard the song "Don't Stop Believing"?
- "Stop!" shouted the police officer.

American English differs from British English in one important way: In American English, periods and commas always go within closing quotation marks, regardless if the quotation marks are single or double.

- **American English:** I said, "I don't like rain."
- **British English:** I said, "I don't like rain".

Brackets

Brackets [] clarify or explain a nonexistent part of the sentence, especially in a direct quotation.

- I read that novel [*The Great Gatsby*] in high school.
- Lisa said, “[I] can’t believe that he [Brad Pitt] is here!”

The word *sic* in brackets is used to inform the reader of a mistake in the original quotation that is intentionally being left in.

- Roberts stated, “Dolphins is [*sic*] beautiful animals.”
- Anne writes that “gardening is very fun, to [*sic*].”

Ellipses

Ellipses (...) When omitting a word or words in a quotation, use ellipses to indicate that content has been deleted. A space should precede and follow the ellipses. Make sure that the sentence does not lose its meaning and remains grammatically correct.

- **Original Text:** “He got away. We called in for backup, drove with blaring sirens, and chased after him, but he ran faster than we did,” said the policeman.
- **Ellipses:** “He got away. We . . . chased after him, but he ran faster . . .,” said the policeman.

Ellipses are only in brackets to differentiate between ellipses already present in the quote and your omission. If the quote already has an omission, use brackets around the ellipses you are adding to indicate which is yours and which is the original.

- **Original Text:** “I’m feeling my Inner Infant standing holding the bars of his crib and looking out of the bars . . . bars of his crib and crying for his Mommy and Daddy to come hold him and nurture him.”
- **Ellipses:** “I’m feeling my Inner Infant [. . .] looking out of the bars . . . bars of his crib and crying for his Mommy and Daddy to come hold him and nurture him.”

~David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*

Use ellipses when the quotation ends with a parenthetical reference (such as a page number, a name, or a title), and follow the ellipses with the ending quotation mark, citation, and period.

- “Leonardo’s interest in Euclidian geometry started during his time in Milan . . .” (91).

When using ellipses at the end of a quotation without a parenthetical reference, you will often follow with a period, for a total of four points. Note that this rule varies by style guide, so you should always check the style guide you’re using to confirm this detail. There is no space before the first period or after the last period.

- The article states, “Many students work while attending school. . . .”

Ellipses can also indicate hesitation or pauses in speech.

- “The winnah, and still heavyweight champion of the world . . . Joe Louis.”
~Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Activity 1: Embedding Quotations

Embed the following quotations using the name Jane Smith and any of the three techniques for embedding quotations mentioned in this handout. Try using different signal phrases for each one.

1. “The Grammy Awards were created to fight against the new wave of rock music.”
2. “The Mars rover landed in August 2012 and is there to discover whether or not Mars is suitable for life.”

Sample Answer Key for Embedding Quotations

1. Jane Smith **claims** that “the Grammy Awards were created to fight against the new wave of rock music.”
2. **According to** Jane Smith, “The Mars rover landed in August 2012 and is there to discover whether or not Mars is suitable for life.”

Activity 2: Quotation Marks

In the following sentences, put quotation marks where they are necessary.

1. Jimmy said, I have to clean my room later.
2. According to Anderson Davis, Boys are more likely to be aggressive than girls (2).

Answer Key for Quotation Marks

1. Jimmy said, "I have to clean my room later."
2. According to Anderson Davis, "Boys are more likely to be aggressive than girls" (2).

Activity 3: Brackets

Place brackets as needed in the following sentences.

1. My sister exclaimed, “It the package is finally here!”
2. The writer wrote, “I have has *sic* enough of your attitude!”
3. We saw him Gary’s brother at the café yesterday.

Answer Key for Brackets

1. [the package]
2. [*sic*]

3. [Gary's brother]

Activity 4: Ellipses

Indicate if the ellipses in the following sentences are used correctly or incorrectly.

1. “The hens in the barn . . . laid eggs.”
2. “Well, look who walked in . . . Katie Peppermint,” sneered Carol.
3. “The painting by her was [. . .] inspiring.”

Answer Key for Ellipses

1. Correct
2. Correct
3. Incorrect—Ellipses are only placed in brackets to differentiate between ellipses already present in the quote. Remove the brackets.

References

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Random House, 1969.

Harris, Robert A. *Using Sources Effectively*. 3rd ed. Glendale: Pyczak Publishing, 2011. 41-54.
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Wallace, David Foster. *Infinite Jest*. Little, Brown and Company, 1996.