



How to Handle Quotations

Do not write a quotation without introducing it in your own words; all quotations must be made an integral part of your own expression.

Here are guidelines to help:

1. Never precede a quotation with a period or a semicolon; to do so generally means that you are setting off the quotation as a separate sentence, and you should not do that. You would be forming the dreaded “naked” quotation.
2. If there is no pause between the introductory matter and the quotation, then there is no punctuation:

Like Stace, I, too, believe that religion “cannot get on with a purposeless and meaningless universe” (627).

3. If there is a slight pause between the introductory matter and the quotation, use a comma.

According to Merton, “The monastic life as a whole is a hot medium” (663).

4. If there is an emphatic pause between your lead-in and the quotation, use either a colon (:) or a dash (--). The colon works best between segments that are equal (Your lead-in is a sentence as is the quotation.), a dash between segments that are unequal (The quotation might not be a full sentence.).

Cleaver’s reason for preferring the Catholic Church is then obvious: “The whites went only to the Protestant Chapel” (654).

The author, then, sums up the character’s plight at the story’s end in just three words—“lonely, lost, and betrayed” (22).

So far, all of the examples have reflected that the author is known to the reader; if the author’s identity is not immediately clear to the reader, then his or her name is included in the parenthesis with the appropriate page number:

Yet another commentator has defined such behavior as “the ultimate state of being concerned” (Henderson 111).

At least one study charges that the original research experiment was “tainted by false documentation” (Wilson and Miler 445).



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Practice Exercises

Read the following and determine if any punctuation is needed, and if so, what and where.

1. According to Morrow “from the beginning work has been seen as something bad” (199).
2. Near the end of her essay, Williams makes the same point even more emphatically “To work for mere survival is desperate” (45).
3. Maslow says that “first, work provides food and shelter, basic human maintenance” (202).
4. One writer even says that work is “as matter-of-fact as sex and breathing” (Miller 9).
5. And, as Harrison Davies has point out “The Protestant work ethic suggests that work is a kind of collaboration with God” (133).
6. The essay’s final point seems especially relevant to American society today “No one can deny that the work ethic has weakened considerably” (25).
7. After all Simpson says “Work is the way that we tend our world, the way that we connect with others” (45).
8. Most of all, Patterson maintains, our work is “the most vigorous, vivid sign of our lives” (88).

Advice about Ellipsis Marks

If you need to so, indicate omissions or deletion from quoted material with an ellipsis (three spaced periods).

Mason tells us that “the king’s suffering. . . seemed all in vain to me” (324).

Frazier concludes dramatically: “the administration must share the blame for the deaths. . .”(588).

It is ordinarily not necessary to use ellipsis at the beginning of quoted material because whether the first word of the quotation is capitalized or not tells the reader if the quotation is complete or not.