

How to Quote Prose

Title and Reference Format

- ❖ Italicize the titles of works published independently — like books or magazines.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn or *Shakespeare Quarterly*

- ❖ Use quotation marks for the titles of works published within larger works — like essays, articles, chapters, or short stories.

“A Rose for Emily” or “On the Value of *Hamlet*”

- ❖ Place a parenthetical reference after each quotation containing its page numbers. Cite page-number ranges under 100 like this: 34–37. Above 100, repeat only the last two digits of the second number: 211–12 (but of course, 399–400 and 96–102). Place an en dash [–], not a hyphen [-], between the range numbers.
- ❖ Periods and commas *always* go inside quotation marks.

“Periods and commas,” says Dr. Womack, “*always* go inside quotation marks.”

Brief Prose Quotations

- ❖ If a prose quotation runs four lines or less, put it in quotation marks and incorporate it in the text. Note that the period goes after the parenthetical reference.

According to Stephen Booth: “Shakespeare was almost certainly homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual. The sonnets provide no evidence on the matter” (548).

Block Quotations

- ❖ Format prose quotations that run more than four lines as block quotations. Start on a new line and set the quotation one inch in from the left margin. Do *not* add quotation marks. A colon generally introduces a block quotation. Note that the period goes before the parenthetical reference.

In *No Country for Old Men*, Cormac McCarthy demonstrates his ability to describe complex physical actions clearly and vividly:

He was slightly bent over when Chigurh squatted and scooted his manacled hands beneath him to the back of his knees. In the same motion he sat and rocked backwards and passed the chain under his feet and then stood instantly and effortlessly. If it looked like a thing he'd practiced many times it was. He dropped his cuffed hands over the deputy's head and leaped into the air and slammed both knees against the back of the deputy's neck and hauled back on the chain.
(6)

- ❖ If you need to quote two or more paragraphs, indent the first line of each paragraph an additional quarter inch. If the first sentence quoted does not begin a paragraph in the source, however, do not indent it the extra amount; indent only the lines of the successive paragraphs.

J.K. Rowling can evoke a character's personality in just a few sentences:

Professor McGonagall was again different. Harry had been quite right to think she wasn't a teacher to cross. Strict and clever, she gave them a talking to the moment they sat down in her first class.

"Transfiguration is some of the most complex and dangerous magic you will learn at Hogwarts," she said. "Anyone messing around in my class will leave and not come back. You have been warned." (133–34)

Ellipses

- ❖ An ellipsis [...] indicates the omission of words, phrases, or sentences from within a quoted passage. Since readers will assume that all your quotations are short excerpts from longer sources, you do not need to put ellipses at the beginnings or ends of quotations.

Any good word processor can insert a true ellipsis mark, so approximating an ellipsis using periods and spaces is inelegant and unnecessary.

- ❖ When you omit material from a quoted sentence: skip a space, insert the ellipsis, skip a space, then resume the quotation.

Displaying a prodigious knowledge of English grammar, David Foster Wallace opines: “*Hopefully* at the beginning of a sentence ... actually functions ... as a ‘sentence adverb’ that indicates the speaker’s attitude about the state of affairs described by the sentence” (100–01).

- ❖ If the ellipsis coincides with the end of a quoted sentence: mark the end of the sentence with a period, skip a space, insert the ellipsis, skip a space, then start the next sentence.

Robert Kaplan draws a sharp contrast between two Prime Ministers: “Chamberlain’s was a shallow realism. ... But Churchill knew more” (18).

- ❖ If the ellipsis comes before the end of one sentence and the start of another: skip a space, insert the ellipsis, skip a space, insert the period, skip a space, then start the next sentence.

Andrew Sullivan points out that “of all our relationships, friendship is the most common In its universality, it even trumps family” (176).