QUOTATION MANIPULATION AND NOTATION: BRACKETS, THE ELLIPSIS, AND YOU

You must copy the quotation exactly as it appears in its original form, following all capitalization and punctuation. Sometimes, the quote needs to be altered from its original wording. In this class, you can alter a quote in many ways as long as you follow the MLA 8th edition rules of notation.

☼ **Brackets   [   ]**

Use brackets to add words to a quote. Brackets serve a variety of purposes.

When to use brackets:

♦ to make the quotation grammatically correct within the context of your sentence

Original: "I think it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it take you."

Quotation: Dillard "think[s] it would be well, and proper, and obedient, and pure, to grasp your one necessity and not let it go, to dangle from it limp wherever it take you."

♦ to clarify a pronoun

Quotation: "Alice carried it [the letter] with her at all times."

♦ to further bring out your point

Quotation: "Artie hunched over as a result of the weight of his [too heavy] backpack."   *(Here the writer wanted to stress weight of the backpack.)*

Always try to alter <u>your</u> wording to fit the quote to avoid the distraction of too many brackets.

When <u>NOT</u> to use brackets …

♦ to change first person pronouns

Original: "I knew they left me behind as soon as the door closed."
Quotation: Keenly aware, Alice "knew they left me behind as soon as the door closed."

☼ **The Ellipsis . . .** (place one space before each period and one space after the last period)

An ellipsis indicates that you removed a word or words from a complete sentence. According to MLA 8th edition, "Whenever you omit . . . from a quoted passage, you should be guided by two principles: fairness to the quoted author and the grammatical integrity of your writing. A quotation should never be presented in a way that could cause a reader to misunderstand the sentence structure of the original source" (80-81).

No ellipsis is needed when
>   *(1) words are removed from the beginning of a quote that now does not start with a capital letter.*
>
>   *(2) you clearly are quoting only part of a sentence because the quote is only <u>a very short phrase</u>.* **(MLA is unclear about exactly how many words is a short quote [8 words or less?], but use an ellipsis if it looks like the quote could be the end of the sentence.)**

Use an ellipsis when your quotation reads like a complete sentence although the original sentence does not end there:

♦   to remove words from the middle of a quote

Original:	"I was walking through the park one day in the merry merry month of May."
Quotation:	There "was walking . . . one day in the merry . . . month of May."

♦   to remove words from the end of a quote – *Notes: 1) there are four dots because one is a period signaling the end of the sentence 2) the first dot is up against the final letter of the word; there is no space between the final word and the first dot.*

Original:	"I was walking through the park one day in the merry merry month of May."
Quotation:	The speaker recalls, "I was walking through the park one day. . . ."

♦   to indicate that words were removed from the beginning of a quote, but there is a capital letter that makes it unclear

Original:	"Yesterday afternoon, I was walking through the park one day in the merry merry month of May."
Quotation:	The speaker recalls, ". . . I was walking through the park one day. . . .."

Your quotes should be short, for I am more interested in <u>your</u> words and ideas. However, below are some examples of rules that may be relevant in very rare cases.

♦   To remove complete sentences from in between two quoted sentences, place a period BEFORE the ellipsis.

Original:	"If the Civil Rights Movement is dead, and it gave us nothing else, it gave us each forever and always. It gave us a means to come together. It gave some of us heartbreak and agony, but it brought all of us comfort."
Quotation:	"If the Civil Rights movement is dead, and it gave us nothing else, it gave us each forever and always. . . . It gave some of us heartbreak and agony, but it brought all of us comfort."

- To remove the end of one sentence and complete sentences in between two quoted sentences, place a period AFTER the ellipsis.

  Original: "If the Civil Rights Movement is dead, and it gave us nothing else, it gave us each forever and always. It gave us a means to come together. It gave some of us heartbreak and agony, but it brought all of us comfort."

  Quotation: "If the Civil Rights Movement is dead, and it gave us nothing else, it gave us each forever. . . . It gave some of us heartbreak and agony, but it brought all of us comfort."

- To remove the end of one sentence and continue on in the middle of another sentence, place an ellipsis at the spot where the sentences now join.

  Original: "If the Civil Rights Movement is dead, and it gave us nothing else, it gave us each forever and always. It gave us a means to come together. It gave some of us heartbreak and agony, but it brought all of us comfort."

  Quotation: "If the Civil Rights Movement is dead, and it gave us nothing else, it . . . brought all of us comfort."

☼ An Ellipsis in Brackets   [...]

- Use this *only* if the original text has an ellipsis and you want to take out words. Place *your* ellipsis within brackets to show you added it.

  Original: "I must admit that it was an . . . interesting performance, to put it politely."

  Quotation: "I must admit that it was an . . . interesting performance [. . .]."

☼ Your Punctuation and Quotation Marks (with and without parenthetical citations)

- There are three basic rules:

1. All **commas** and **periods** should be placed *inside* the quotation marks. (When using a parenthetical citation, place these after the citation only.)

2. All **colons** and **semicolons** should be placed *outside* the quotation marks. (When using a parenthetical citation, place these after the citation only.)

3. **Question marks** and **exclamation marks** should be placed *within* the quotation marks when they apply only to the quoted material; they should be placed *outside* when the entire sentence, including the quoted material, is a question or exclamation. (When using a parenthetical citation, follow the rules above and place the appropriate punctuation [a comma, period, semicolon, or colon] after the citation as well.)

   Examples:
   a) "You've got to be carefully taught," wrote Oscar Hammerstein II about how racial prejudice is perpetrated. (Note the need for the period to be changed to a comma here since the sentence continues.)

b) "What a wonderful little almanac you are, Celia!" Dorothea responds to her sister.

c) When is Victor able to "describe any emotions from this catastrophe . . ."?

☼ Inside Quotes

♦ Use only when you are going to quote *both* dialogue and narration *at the same time*.

Original:	"Entailments are bad," I was advising him, when I slowly awoke to the fact that I was addressing the entire aggregation.
Quotation:	"'Entailments are bad,' I was advising him. . . ."
Quotation:	Scout tells Mr. Cunningham that "Entailments are bad. . . ."

♦ Use only when you are going to quote both something in quotations in the text and other unquoted text at the same time.

Original:	The advanced girls could already alternate between two speeds: "slouch" and "amble."
Quotation:	"The advanced girls could already alternate between two speeds: 'slouch' and 'amble.'"
Quotation:	Many members of the pack can already "amble" in a human fashion.

☼ Introducing Quotes

♦ Use a colon to introduce a quote with a full sentence.

The girls recognize that they are in a difficult situation: "We had never wanted to run away so badly in our lives; but who did we have to run back to?"

♦ Follow traditional grammar rules when blending your words and quotes.

Claudette admits, "I stumbled around in a daze, my mouth black with shoe polish."

Claudette admits that "I stumbled around in a daze, my mouth black with shoe polish." (Note that there is no comma here. Also, please note that Grammar Check in Word recommends using "that" only when introducing a paraphrase. They recommend using the above style of phrasing to introduce a direct quote.)

Claudette's desire to eat her shoes like an animal results in a "mouth black with shoe polish."