



Punctuation with Quotations

Introducing Quotes

- Use a comma when you introduce a quote with a word such as “said” (e.g. claimed, observed, argues, etc):

The president warned, “I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken Nation in the midst of a stricken world may require.”

- Otherwise, do not use a comma where normal syntax would not require it:

In fact, Roosevelt said the need for swift executive action might require suspending the “normal balance of Executive and legislative authority.”

- Use a colon after a complete sentence heralding multi-sentence quotes or block quotes.

Wallace explained the dangers of chauvinism in stark terms: “There can be no privileged peoples. We ourselves in the United States are no more a master race than the Nazis.”

Ending Quotes

- Commas and periods go inside quotation marks.

In Wallace’s understanding of the “march of freedom,” the common people spoke “in terms of blood on the battlefield.”

- Colons and semicolons go outside the quotation marks.

Moore identified two characteristics of this “persecuting society”: the scapegoating of “deviant” groups and the emergence of retributive law.

Block quotes. Use them sparingly—that is, only when your interpretation depends on the *whole* quote. If a quotation is four lines or more, set it off as a block quote introduced by an informative sentence and a colon. Indent every line of the quote five spaces. Block quotations do not require quotation marks, since the formatting signals that it is quoted text.

Wallace’s powerful equation of fascism with evil merits full citation:

Through the leaders of the Nazi revolution, Satan now is trying to lead the common man of the whole world back into slavery and darkness. . . . The belief in one Satan-inspired Fuhrer, with his Quislings, his Laval, and his Mussolinis—his ‘gaulitiers’ in every nation in the world—is the last and ultimate darkness. Is there any hell hotter than that of being a Quisling, unless it is that of being a Laval or a Mussolini?⁷



Punctuation with Quotations

Editing Quotes with Brackets and Ellipses

a. Adding: Use brackets when you're adding words or letters that weren't part of the original. Brackets are especially useful for fixing unclear pronouns or problems of subject-verb agreement.

PROBLEM: *Lewis concluded her remarks by saying that she “believe wholeheartedly in the principles of freedom of religion and of expression.”*

FIXED: *Lewis concluded her remarks by saying that she “believe[d] wholeheartedly in the principles of freedom of religion and of expression.”*

PROBLEM: *Ali was “astonished that he stayed on his feet after the third punch.”*

FIXED: *Ali was “astonished that he [his opponent] stayed on his feet after the third punch.”*

b. Subtracting: Use ellipses (...) to indicate when you've cut part of a quotation. Strive not to overuse them, though. Too many ellipses are unsightly, and they may provoke skepticism about your fidelity to the original meaning of the text.

John Muir wrote that National Parks “are always subject to attack, mostly by despoiling gainseekers, ~~mischief makers of every degree from Satan to supervisors, lumbermen, cattlemen, farmers, etc.,~~ eagerly trying to make everything dollarable.”

John Muir wrote that National Parks “are always subject to attack, mostly by despoiling gainseekers . . . eagerly trying to make everything dollarable.”

You don't need ellipses at the *beginning* of the quotation if it's blended with your own prose, because the lack of capitalization indicates that this is not the beginning of the sentence in the original. When you edit at the *end* of a quotation, however, you should include ellipses, *plus* the final period (for a total of FOUR dots).

John Muir writes that National Parks “are always subject to attack, mostly by despoiling gainseekers”