

Using Quotes In Your Essay

The Basics

For MLA citation information, please visit the Purdue OWL website.

When using quotes from a book, some basic citation rules apply:

1. Anytime you pull exact wording from the book, place the words in quotation marks
 - “Mr. Chao is a lover of delicious cookies and other baked goods.”
2. Any changes that YOU make to the quote must be bracketed.
 - “[He] is a lover of delicious cookies and other baked goods.”
3. If you decide to cut a quote short for whatever reason, you need to provide the elipses symbol (...)
 - “Mr. Chao is a lover of delicious cookies...”
4. The citation goes AFTER the quotes, but BEFORE the punctuation.
 - “Mr. Chao is a lover of delicious cookies” (Mr. Chao 2).
5. When quoting poetry, line breaks are marked with the “ / ” symbol.
 - “My Oberon, what visions have I seen! / Methought I was enamored of an ass.”
6. When citing a play, use Act.Scene.Lines
 - (III.II.24-25)
7. Include the Author’s last name the FIRST time you cite the book followed by the page number (Homer 20). Thereafter you only need to include the page number.

Quotes are considered to be EVIDENCE, and thus fit into the “example” category in your outlines. They are NOT supports, meaning that they do not stand alone as arguments. A quote can BACK UP or PROVE your argument, but they are NOT your argument.

Rules of Thumb:

1. Include what you NEED from the text, but no more (No excessively long quotes!)
2. Any time that you alter a text in ANY WAY, include the [brackets].
3. Make changes to the tense or to singular / plural to make the quote fit your sentence
4. When in doubt, stick with the original intended meaning of the text
Original Quote: “Mr. Chao is a lover of delicious cookies and other baked goods.”
Altered Quote: “Mr. Chao is [...] delicious [...]”

Types of Quotes

In general, there are two ways to use textual evidence in your examples:

1. Indirect Quotes
2. Direct Quotes

Indirect Quotes

- Indirect quotes refer to the text without actually citing it. They are often summaries of what happened in a particular scene or chapter.
- Indirect quotes do not need to be cited

Example: Oberon administering the love-juice to Titania is an example of how love can lead people to do sinister things.

Direct Quotes

- Direct quotes are pulled directly from the text (hence the term) and always occur within quotation marks
- You must use at LEAST one direct quote per paragraph (Theme), but more is better in this case.
- There are three types of Direct Quotes: **Full Quotes**, **Partial Quotes**, and **Block Quotes**

Full Quotes: When the entire quote is provided in the sentence. Often the quote is explained BEFORE or AFTER the quote.

Example: Odysseus doesn't recognize Athena at first, "'Goddess,' the nimble-witted Odysseus replied, 'it is hard for a man to recognize you at sight, however expert he may be, for you are always changing your disguise'" (177), however, he shows how effective he is with words by admitting that fact and then explaining why it shouldn't be held against him.

Partial Quotes: Shortened Quotes (omissions are marked by the "... " symbol) that are embedded into the natural flow of sentence. The quote is often explained THROUGHOUT the sentence.

Example: Athena reinforces her opinion of Odysseus by telling him that his is "...so persuasive, so quick-witted, so self-possessed" (177), which is one way that Homer reminds us that Odysseus is indeed favored by the Gods.

Block Quotes: Block quotes are large portions of text placed in entirety at the beginning of a section. Block quotes are often used when the writer wishes to deeply analyze a quote by picking it apart line by line. You probably won't be using this method often in this paper, but if you choose to do so you must follow these guidelines:

1. Use for quotations lasting more than four lines
2. Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented **one inch** from the left margin; maintain double-spacing.
3. Your parenthetical citation should come **after** the closing punctuation mark
4. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks
5. Do NOT use quotation marks for block quotes

Example: Odysseus reveals his fatal flaw in his passion-driven speech to Polyphemus in which he pridefully taunts the cyclops in spite of his men's efforts to restrain him:

But my temper was up; their words did not dissuade me, and in my rage I shouted back at him once more: "Cyclops, if anyone ever asks you how you came by your blindness, tell him your eye was put out by Odysseus, sacker of cities, the son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca." (Homer 123)

Direct quotes can **NEVER** stand on their own. Don't "quote and run!"

- They must be explained either before or afterwards (and sometimes it is a good idea to provide introduction AND explanation).

BAD: For example, when Odysseus is kicked by Melanthius, he debates "whether to leap at the fellow and kill him with his staff or to life him by his middle and smash his head on the ground" (Homer 228).

GOOD: An example of how Odysseus has learned to curb his pride is when he is kicked by Melanthius on his way to the palace. Odysseus debates "whether to leap at the fellow and kill him with his staff or to life him by his middle and smash his head on the ground" (Homer 228), but in the end shows his maturity by deciding not to return the favor.