Quoting and In-Text Citation Using MLA Guidelines

This handout is designed to help you learn how to quote and cite information properly in your writing. Anytime you use information from an outside source – a book, an essay, an article, an online source, even a YouTube video – you MUST give credit to that source by documenting it in two ways: in an in-text citation and on your works cited page. Documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) are systems of giving credit to sources in an organized and specifically formatted way so that a reader is able to trace your steps all the way back to the sources that you included in your paper. Documentation clearly indicates to your reader which information you borrowed from sources. Not documenting sources constitutes plagiarism (or academic dishonesty), and offence that can result in a failing grade on an assignment or in the course, or expulsion from the university. The basic rules for documenting sources are:

1. Direct quotes (exact language from a source) must be enclosed in quotation marks (" ") and followed by an in-text citation
2. Paraphrases must be carefully constructed and also be documented by in-text citations
3. Page or paragraph numbers (when available) should always be included in in-text citations
4. In-text citations should clearly match the works cited entries at the end of your document
5. Works cited entries should be complete and accurate

Basic Rules for In-Text Citation

- All in-text citations follow the same pattern:

  The writer says, "Outside Brown, quitters are no heroes" (Neusner 261).
  quotation mark, text, quotation mark, space, parenthesis, author's last name, page number, parenthesis, period.

- If the author's name is contained in the sentence, however, it does not need to appear in the parentheses:

  Neusner says, "Outside Brown, quitters are no heroes" (261).

- There are two exceptions:

  1) <u>Long Quote</u>: If you use a long quote (more than four lines), there are NO quotation marks and the punctuation goes before the citation (see the section on "Long Quotes" on this handout for details).

  2) <u>Quote with Different End Punctuation</u>: If the quote ends with a question mark or exclamation point rather than a period, keep the punctuation that the original author uses (see "Quotes with Different End Punctuation" on this handout for details).

- Once you have quoted something and cited it, if you use any or all of the same words again, no citation is necessary – quotation marks, however, must still be used to indicate to your reader that you are presenting someone else's words.
  For example: First reference: The author says, "quitters are no heroes" (Neusner 261).
  Subsequent reference: Therefore, students should realize that "quitters are no heroes."

- One last thing to remember – When you quote an author in an essay or paper, the first time you mention that author, you must provide the <u>full name</u>. After that first time, use the last name only in all subsequent references to that author.

THE DOCUMENTATION ROADMAP—it might be helpful to think about citing sources as a "roadmap" that leads readers all the way back to the sources you used.

The information in the
IN-TEXT CITATION leads to the
↓
WORKS CITED list, where all of the information about the source is provided, so that the reader can then find the
↓
ACTUAL SOURCE at a library, online, in a database, etc.

Proper Punctuation and Formatting for Quoting an Author

- ## Simple Quote

  Neusner says, "When you did not keep appointments, we made new ones" (261).

  If the author is *not* indicated in the sentence, his/her name goes inside the parentheses:

  One professor says, "When you did not keep appointments, we made new ones" (Neusner 261).

- ## Quote from Someone Other than the Author of the Original

  Professor Carter A. Daniel of Rutgers University says, "We had to do it, for the sake of education" (Neusner 261).

  This kind of quote follows the rules for a simple quote. Notice, however, that the author (Neusner) did not say these words: Professor Carter A. Daniel did. In this case, I introduce the quote using Daniel's name to indicate that someone other than the author of the text spoke/wrote the words.

  If I *do not name* Daniel in the sentence before the quote, the quote would look like this instead:

  It has been said, "We had to do it, for the sake of education" (Daniel qtd. in Neusner 261).

  This way, the reader knows that the author (Neusner) did not actually say these words but was quoting someone else. ["qtd. in" stands for "quoted in"]

- ## Quote Introduced with "that" & Quote with an Ellipse (in the middle of the quote)

  The author tells us that "We have prepared you for a world…that cannot exist" (Neusner 261).

  Notice this quote uses no comma and no colon. This is because I used the word "that" before the quote. When introducing a quote with "that" a comma or colon is <u>never</u> used.

  Notice, too, the ellipse (…). Ellipses indicate that I have omitted (or left out) a part of the text.

- ## Incorporating a Quote & Quote with an Ellipse (at the end of the quote)

  Obviously our professors think we are "peer-paralyzed adolescents…" (Neusner 261).

  This quote has no comma or colon before it. That is because I am using the author's words to <u>finish my sentence</u>. This is called incorporating a quote. When you incorporate, no comma or colon is used.

  Notice, too, that after the quote is an ellipse (…). The ellipse indicates that there is more to Neusner's sentence and I didn't finish it.

  The idea of using an incorporated quote is not to quote any more than you need to. Too many quotes distract the reader and weakens your ethos (credibility) as a writer.

  NOTE: You NEVER use an ellipse at the beginning of a quote. This is because the use of lowercase or capital will indicate to your reader whether your quote begins at the start of the original sentence or in the middle of the original sentence. For example: A capital letter tells your reader that the quote begins at the start of the original sentence:
  Neusner says, "Outside Brown, quitters are no heroes" (261).
  A lowercase letter indicates that you have left out the beginning of the original sentence:
  Neusner says, "quitters are no heroes" (261).

• Paraphrasing

College professors think of their students as a bother, as people to be gotten rid of, nuisances they pass merely to get them to go away (Neusner 261).

Notice here that there are no quotation marks at all. This sentence is paraphrased. I borrowed the idea—none of the words, just the idea—from Neusner, so I gave him credit for the idea. Without this citation, I would be plagiarizing. If I used any of Neusner's phrasing at all, I would have to put quotation marks around his words.

• Interrupted Quote

"Try not to act toward your coworkers and bosses," says Neusner, "as you have toward us" (261).

This is called an interrupted quote. It is a variation of the simple quote. Try to vary the way you quote. It makes your paper more interesting to read and shows your strength as a writer.

• Introducing Quotes with a Colon

Professors have been pretending to care for years: "when you were boring, we acted as if you were saying something important" (Neusner 261).

This quote is introduced with a colon. A colon indicates that the quotation is an explanation of or example for the sentence I just wrote: "when you were boring (etc)" is an example of the pretending of professors I am talking about before the quote. The thing to remember about using a colon to introduce a quote is that you must provide <u>a complete sentence of your own before the colon</u>, and then <u>a complete sentence of quote after the colon</u>.

• Long Quote

A long quote is any quote that is more than <u>four lines</u>.

Neusner points out:

> *We the faculty take no pride in our educational achievements with you. We have prepared you for a world that …cannot*
>
> *exist. You have spent four years supposing that failure leaves no record. You have learned…that when your work goes*
>
> *poorly, the painless solution is to drop out. But starting now, in the world to which you go, failure marks you.*
>
> *Confronting difficulty by quitting leaves you changed. Outside Brown, quitters are no heroes. (261)*

I can't help but believe that Neusner is at least partly right. Often, students will drop out of a class that isn't going the they way they want it

to or if they are not getting the grade they want.

` This is an example of a long quote. Notice a few things:

‣ First, the quote is <u>introduced with a colon</u> (:). All long quotes should be introduced in this way.

‣ Second, notice that the<u> ending punctuation goes before the parentheses</u>. All long quotes leave the punctuation before the citation and have no period after.

‣ Third, there are <u>no quotation marks</u> and the quote is <u>indented TEN spaces, not five</u> (two "TAB" spaces, not one). The whole quote has to be ten spaces over from the left margin. The right margin remains the same. This formatting indicates that you are presenting a quote, so no quotation marks are needed.

‣ Fourth, notice that the line after the long quote starts back out on the left margin without indenting. Because you should never quote without responding, long quotes generally have a sentence or more afterward that is still part of the same paragraph. This is indicated by the sentence beginning all the way out to the left margin.

• Quotes with Different End Punctuation (? and !)

After ranting about how badly he has treated his students, Neusner asks, "And all this why?" (261).

This is an example of a quote that has different end punctuation—a question mark or an exclamation point. Here, the question mark is part of the quote from Neusner, so it remains inside the quotation marks and there is still a period after the citation.

The only exception is if YOU ask the question. If the question mark or exclamation point is YOURS, you put it after the citation. For example: *Do you think students will "unlearn the lies" (Neusner 261)?*

• Quotes with Added Words and/or Corrections (Using Square [ ] Brackets)

Sometimes, you need to change a word, a verb tense, add a word, or otherwise adjust the grammar in a quote in order for it to make sense, or make *more* sense, to your reader. Square brackets—[like these]—are used to indicate that you have added or changed something for clarity.

Is it possible to "unlearn the lies [professors] taught [students]" (Neusner 261)?

Above, I have substituted the word [professors] for "we" and the word [students] for "you" to clarify who I the quote refers to.

Neusner warns students to "Try not to act towards … coworkers and bosses as you have acted towards us [professors]" (261).

In this quote, I have added the word [professors] after "us" to clarify who the quote refers to.

AND ONE THING YOU MUST NEVER DO:

• The Floating (or Orphan) Quote

I am so tired of teachers blaming their students for their incompetence. "When you were dull, we pretended you were smart" (Neusner26 1). He even admits that he told us we were smart. What were we supposed to think?

This is what I call a floating or orphan quote. Notice it stands all alone with no words of my own to introduce it, follow it, or make it flow well into my writing.

The simplest way to fix this problem is with a colon:
I am so tired of teachers blaming their students for their incompetence: "When you were dull, we pretended you were smart" (Neusner 261). He even admits that he told us we were smart. What were we supposed to think? The error most often happens when a colon would be appropriate anyway.

But if a colon doesn't really work, simply mentioning the author—turning it into a simple quote—is acceptable:
I am so tired of teachers blaming their students for their incompetence. As Neusner says, "When you were dull, we pretended you were smart" (261). He even admits that he told us we were smart. What were we supposed to think?