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# Lesson Proper for Week 17

## OMITTING QUOTED MATTER WITH ELLIPSIS POINTS

You may omit portions of quoted material with three spaced ellipsis points, as shown in the following examples.

### Context

In omitting passages, be fair to the author. Do not change the meaning or take a quotation out of context.

### Correctness

Maintain the grammatical correctness of your sentences—that is, avoid fragments and misplaced modifiers. You don't want your readers to misunderstand the structure of the original. When you quote only a phrase, readers will understand that you omitted most of the original sentence, so no ellipsis is necessary.

Phil Withim recognizes the weakness in Captain Vere's "intelligence and insight" into the significance of his decisions regarding Billy Budd (118).

### Omission within a Sentence

Use three ellipsis points (periods) with a space before each and a space after the last.

Phil Withim objects to the idea that "such episodes are intended to demonstrate that Vere . . . has the intelligence and insight to perceive the deeper issue" (118).



## Omission at the End of a Sentence

If an ellipsis occurs at the end of your sentence, use three periods with a space before each following a sentence period—that is, you will have four periods with no space before the first or after the last. A closing quotation mark finishes the punctuation.

R. W. B. Lewis (62) declares that “if Hester has sinned, she has done so as an affirmation of life, and her sin is the source of life. . . .”

However, if a page citation also appears at the end in conjunction with the ellipsis, use three periods with a space before each and put the sentence period after the final parenthesis. Thus, you will have three ellipsis points with a space before each, the closing quotation mark followed by a space, the parenthetical citation, and the period.

R. W. B. Lewis declares that “if Hester has sinned, she has done so as an affirmation of life, and her sin is the source of life . . .” (62).

## Omission at the Beginning of a Sentence

Most style guides discourage the use of ellipsis points for material omitted from the beginning of a source, as shown here:

He states: “. . . the new parent has lost the wisdom and daily support of older, more experienced family members” (Zigler 34).

The passage would read better without the ellipsis points:

He states that “the new parent has lost the wisdom and daily support of older, more experienced family members” (Zigler 34).

Another option is this one, as stipulated by the *Chicago Manual of Style*: “If a quotation that is only part of a sentence in the original forms a complete sentence as quoted, a lowercase letter may be changed to a capital if appropriate.”

He states: “The new parent has lost the wisdom and daily support of older, more experienced family members” (Zigler 34).

Here’s another example:

R. W. B. Lewis declares, “If Hester has sinned, she has done so as an affirmation of life, and her sin is the source of life . . .” (62).



## Omission of Complete Sentences and Paragraphs

Use a closing punctuation mark and three spaced ellipsis points when omitting one or more sentences from within a long quotation. Here's an omission in which one sentence ends, another sentence or more is omitted, and a full sentence ends the passage.

Zigler reminds us that "child abuse is found more frequently in a single (female) parent home in which the mother is working. . . . The unavailability of quality day care can only make this situation more stressful" (42).

Here's an omission from the middle of one sentence to the middle of another:

Zigler reminds us that "child abuse is found more frequently in a single (female) parent home in which the mother is working. . . . so the unavailability of quality day care can only make this situation more stressful" (42).

## Omissions in Poetry

If you omit a word or phrase in a quotation of poetry, indicate the omission with three or four ellipsis points, just as you would with omissions in a prose passage. However, if you omit a complete line or more from the poem, indicate the omission by a line of spaced periods that equals the average length of the lines. Note that the parenthetical citation shows two sets of lines.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning asks:

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,

Ere the sorrow comes with years?

They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,

And *that* cannot stop their tears.

.....

They are weeping in the playtime of the others,

In the country of the free. (1-4, 11-12)

## Avoid Excessive Use of Ellipsis Points

Many times, you can be more effective if you incorporate short phrases rather than quote the whole sprinkled with many ellipsis points. Note how this next passage incorporates quotations without the use of ellipsis:

The long-distance marriage, according to William Nichols, "works best when there are no minor-aged children to be considered," the two people are "equipped by temperament and personality to spend a considerable amount of time alone," and both are able to "function in a mature, highly independent fashion" (54).



## Ellipsis in the Original

If the original passage has ellipsis by the author, and you want to cut additional words, place brackets around your ellipsis points to distinguish them from the author's ellipsis points. If the original says:

Shakespeare's innovative techniques in working with revenge tragedy are important in *Hamlet* . . . while the use of a Senecan ghost is a convention of revenge tragedy, a ghost full of meaningful contradictions in calling for revenge is part of Shakespeare's dramatic suspense.

If you cut the middle phrase, use this form:

One writer says, "Shakespeare's innovative techniques in working with revenge tragedy are important in *Hamlet* . . . [ . . . ] a ghost full of meaningful contradictions in calling for revenge is part of Shakespeare's dramatic suspense."

## ALTERING QUOTATIONS WITH PARENTHESES AND BRACKETS

You will sometimes need to alter a quotation to emphasize a point or to make something clear. You might add material, italicize an important word, or use the word *sic* (Latin for "thus" or "so") to alert readers that you have properly reproduced the material even though the logic or the spelling of the original might appear to be in error. Use parentheses or brackets according to these basic rules.

### Parentheses

Use parentheses to enclose your comments or explanations that fall outside a quotation, shown in these examples:

The problem with airbags is that children (even those in protective seats) can be killed by the force as the airbag explodes. Boughman (46) urges car makers to "direct the force of automotive airbags *upward* against the windshield" (emphasis added).

Roberts (22) comments that "politicians suffer a conflict with honoure" (sic).

### Brackets

Use brackets for interpolation, which means inserting your own comment into a text or quotation. The use of brackets signals the insertion. Note the following rules.

### Use Brackets to Clarify

This same critic indicates that "we must avoid the temptation to read it [*The Scarlet Letter*] heretically" (118).



## Use Brackets to Establish Correct Grammar within an Abridged Quotation

“John F. Kennedy [was] an immortal figure of courage and dignity in the hearts of most Americans,” notes one historian (Jones 82).

He states: “[The] new parent has lost the wisdom and daily support of older, more experienced family members” (Zigler 34).

## Use Brackets to Note the Addition of Italics

He says, for instance, that the “extended family is now rare in contemporary society, and with its demise the new parent has *lost the wisdom* [my emphasis] and daily support of older, more experienced family members” (Zigler 42).

## Use Brackets to Substitute a Proper Name for a Pronoun

“As we all know, he [Kennedy] implored us to serve the country, not take from it” (Jones 432).

## Use Brackets with *Sic* to Indicate Errors in the Original

Lovell says, “John F. Kennedy, assassinated in November of 1964 [sic], became overnight an immortal figure of courage and dignity in the hearts of most Americans” (62).

## Your Research Project

1. Examine your handling of the sources. Have you introduced them clearly so the reader will know when the borrowing began? Have you closed them with a page citation, as appropriate? Have you placed quotation marks at the beginning and the end of borrowed phrases as well as borrowed sentences?
2. If you have used online sources, look at them again to see if the paragraphs on the website are numbered. If so, use the paragraph numbers in your citation(s); if not, use no numbers—not the numbers on any printout and not paragraph numbers if you must count them.
3. Look at your source material to find a table, graph, figure, or photograph you might insert into your paper as additional evidence. Be certain that you have labeled it correctly.
4. Make a critical journey through your text to be certain you have made an informed choice about the documentation style you need. Normally, instructors will inform you. In general, use MLA style for papers in freshman composition and literature classes; use APA style for papers in the social sciences; use CMS note style for papers in history and the fine arts; use CSE number style for papers in the applied sciences.



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