MLA Style Guide for Formatting Quotations

Adapted from OWL @ Purdue University
Formatting Short Quotations

When using short quotations (four typed lines or fewer) in your text:

- Enclose the quotation within double quotation marks.
- Provide the correct parenthetical citation after the closing quotation marks.
- Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation.
- Question marks and exclamation points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text.
Formatting Short Quotations - Examples

In-text Examples:

According to some, dreams express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184), though others disagree.

According to Foulkes's study, dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (184).
Formatting Long Quotations

When using quotations that are more than four lines in your text:

- Place quotations in a free-standing block of text and omit quotation marks.
- Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented \( \frac{1}{2} \text{ inch} \) from the left margin; maintain double-spacing.
- Your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark.
- You should maintain double-spacing throughout your essay.
In-text Example:
Nelly Dean treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanizes him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Bronte 78)
Adding/Omitting Words

- If you add a word or words in a quotation, you should put brackets around the words to indicate that they are not part of the original text.

- If you omit a word or words from a quotation, you should indicate the deleted word or words by using ellipsis marks, which are three periods ( . . . ) preceded and followed by a space.

- Brackets are not needed around ellipses unless adding brackets would clarify your use of ellipses.
Adding/Omitting Words - Examples

In-text Example for Adding Words:
Jan Harold Brunvand, in an essay on urban legends, states "some individuals [who retell urban legends] make a point of learning every rumor or tale" (78).

In-text example for Omitting Words:
In an essay on urban legends, Jan Harold Brunvand notes that "some individuals make a point of learning every recent rumor or tale . . . and in a short time a lively exchange of details occurs" (78).