

Some Mechanics for Using Quotations

Use the present tense when presenting ideas even if they were actually made in the past. Called the "historical present", this convention is used because the readers, in effect, are continuing to read the material so the text is still "alive."

An example from a paper about Luke might be:

In Luke 12:27-32, the writer affirms "Fear not, little flock; for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

In most cases you should present a quote exactly as the author wrote it. However, occasionally you might need to alter the quote in order for it to fit into the context of your paper, change verb tense, insert explanations, or replace a pronoun with the proper name. In these cases you should mark any such changes with brackets ([]). If you leave out part of a quotation because of length or the information is not relevant to your paper, mark the omissions with ellipsis points. If the omission is a few words but less than a complete sentence, use three points (. . .). Use four points to indicate the omission of more than a full sentence.

An example from a paper about when Martha was upset that her sister Mary was not helping to prepare for Jesus' visit

Martha said, "Lord Tell [Mary] to come and lend me a hand" Luke 10:38. In this case several sentences are left out of the quotation (shown by the ellipses), and consequently the writer needed to include Mary's name (the brackets).

Periods and commas belong inside the ending quotation mark; question marks and exclamation points go outside the ending quotation mark unless they are part of the quoted text.

Example:

Matthew 10:20 says that "it will not you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

Quoted text less than 4 lines or about 40 words go within quotation marks with the text. Quotations longer than this are set off from the text by being indented on the left side and single-spaced. You will not need quotation marks for the longer quoted material.