

Some Mechanics for Using Direct Quotations

In most of your papers and essay tests, you will want to include direct quotations. Here are the conventions.

1. 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."

Example

"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.'"

2. 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 grammar of your sentence.

If you change verb tense, insert explanations, or replace a pronoun with the proper name 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.

Example:

"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 (shown by the brackets).

3. 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

The Greek in Jeremiah 29:7a can be translated as "the earth," "the country," or "the ground."

4. Quotations of less than 4 lines or about 40 words go within quotation marks are not otherwise set off from 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 to add quotation marks to the longer, indented quotations.