



Integrating Quotations in MLA Style

Quotations can enliven your writing if you know when to quote and how to integrate. In some disciplines, quotation is rarely used. In all situations, overuse should be avoided carefully. According to the Modern Language Association (MLA), “quotations should merely help you illustrate or explain” your ideas (75).

When to Quote

The following criteria for when to quote are adapted from Behrens and Rosen’s ninth edition of *Writing and Reading across the Curriculum*.

- **Memorable language**—use quotation when the author of your source turns a phrase, sentence, or passage of particularly powerful, vivid, or memorable language.
- **Clear and concise language**—use quotation when the language in your source is so clear and succinct that any attempt to paraphrase would be ineffective.
- **Authoritative language**—use quotation to add the authority of experts and prominent figures. Quotations from authoritative sources can be useful in supporting your argument.
- **Language for analysis**—Use quotation to highlight source passages that you will discuss and engage in rhetorical analysis.

How to Integrate

Integrate quotations into your own sentences. Do not stand quotations alone as sentences. Provide **signal phrases**, which include the author’s name and a signal verb. MLA style uses present tense signal verbs, in-text citations, and full source listings on the works-cited list at paper’s end.

Freedman states, “Bittman is hardly alone in his reflexive dismissals” (534).

Vary the placement of your signal phrases and use a variety of signal verbs.

“Bittman is hardly alone in his reflexive dismissals,” **Freedman claims** (534).

“Denying the humanity of other people has always been a way to justify oppressing and exterminating them,” **argues Olson**, “and science has a long, sad history of contributing to these atrocities” (13).

Neutral		Argument	Disagreement	Agreement
says	compares	argues	denies	agrees
states	shows	asserts	disagrees	supports
writes	introduces	believes	refutes	confirms
notes	thinks	claims	contradicts	concur
observes	explains	maintains	questions	Concession
indicates	concludes	contends	criticizes	acknowledges
discusses	describes	recommends	warns	concedes
illustrates	comments	points out	complains	grants

Combine paraphrase with quotation to capture the idea and language necessary to express your point:

Science has contributed to the “long, sad history” of atrocities justified by “denying the humanity of other people” (Olson 13).

Include the **credentials of the author** you are quoting in an appositive phrase:

William McDonough, **green architect and co-author of *Cradle to Cradle***, states, “Nature operates according to a system of nutrients and metabolisms in which there is no such thing as waste” (92).

To alter a quotation to clarify or to fit the grammar of your sentence, indicate any changes by placing the altered language in brackets. Be careful not to alter the original meaning.

Furthermore, Pollan argues that “to escape the Western diet, [we must simply] depart the realms it rules: the supermarket, the convenience store, and the fast food outlet” (158).

To shorten the original quotation, use an ellipsis (three periods with a space between each).

Pollan states, “American gas stations now make more money selling food . . . than gasoline . . .” (192).

To quote someone quoted in your source, include the phrase ***qtd. in*** in the parenthetical citation. The best practice is to search for the original source quoted by your source, if available.

Gladys Block, Berkeley professor and epidemiologist, says, “I don’t believe anything I read in nutritional epidemiology anymore” (***qtd. in*** Pollan 78).

If the quotation runs more than four lines in your typed text, indent the quotation one inch from the left margin, omit quotation marks, and place the passage-ending period before the in-text citation.

Hamby describes King’s focus and strategy during the final two years of his life:
The Poor People’s Campaign underscored a shift in King’s social vision away from an emphasis upon integration and toward a more class-oriented critique of American social structure. The elements of the new approach, however, were solidly rooted in King’s theology. . . . [H]e was expressing more clearly than ever—in his calls for massive aid to the poor, for a new spirit of Christian brotherhood, for the salvation of American society—the Christian socialism of Walter Rauschenbusch that had so long captured his imagination. (211-12)

Punctuation

Introduce quotation with a comma, unless the word *that* follows the signal verb (no comma). Use a colon if the language preceding forms a complete sentence.

Pollan urges, “Avoid food products that make health claims” (154).

Pollan reports that “Americans are increasingly eating in solitude” (192).

Pollan proposes developing a strategy for navigating the supermarket: “If you keep to the edges of the store you’ll be that much more likely to wind up with real food in your shopping cart” (157).

Works Consulted

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