



## MLA FORMAT QUOTATIONS

Adapted from *A Writer's Reference*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers

In academic writing, we emphasize our own ideas by paraphrasing or summarizing information from other sources and then analyzing that information in our own words. Direct quotations are most effective when a writer wants to

- add authority to an argument
- explain technical concepts
- include especially vivid or powerful language
- analyze the language of a source.

Avoid dropping quotations into a paper without introduction. Prepare the reader for the borrowed material with a brief introduction, often called a *signal phrase*. The signal phrase usually names the author of the source and provides some context for the quote. Use a variety of signal phrases and sentence constructions to make your writing more interesting.

### Common Signal Phrase Verbs

adds	comments	illustrates	reasons
agrees	compares	implies	reports
argues	confirms	insists	responds
asserts	contends	notes	states
believes	emphasizes	observes	suggests
claims	explains	points out	writes

### Short Quotations

- Integrate quotations of *four lines or less* into a paper with a signal phrase, usually including the author's last name.
- Double space the quoted text and enclose it in quotation marks.
- Follow the quotation with the page number in parentheses *before* the end punctuation. Note: For a source without page numbers, there will be no parenthetical citation if the author has already been introduced in the signal phrase.
- Writers do not always need to quote full sentences from a source. You can choose the most important parts and integrate them into your own sentence.
- Also follow borrowed material with an explanation of why it is important, what it shows, or how it relates to the thesis of the essay.

### Example

According to popular author Malcolm Gladwell, successful people have “hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot” (19).

### Long/Block Quotations

- Set off a quotation of *more than four typed lines* of prose (or more than three lines of poetry) by indenting it one half inch from the left margin.
- Continue double spacing but do not use quotation marks.
- Integrate the long quotation into the paper by introducing it with an informative sentence of your own followed by a colon.
- Follow the quotation with a parenthetical citation one space *after* the end punctuation. For a source without page numbers, there will be no parenthetical citation if the author has already been introduced in the signal phrase.
- Also follow borrowed material with an explanation of why it is important, what it shows, or how it relates to the thesis of the essay.

### Example

Gladwell argues persuasively that success is more than an individual accomplishment:

People don't rise from nothing. We do owe something to parentage and patronage. The people who stand before kings may look like they did it all by themselves. But in fact they are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways others cannot. It makes a difference where and when we grew up. The culture we belong to and the legacies passed down by our forebears shape the patterns of our achievement in ways we cannot begin to imagine. (19)

Corresponding Works Cited page entry:

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Little, Brown, 2008.