

# USING QUOTATIONS IN ESSAYS

## Rules for quotations

1. The quotation must be worked into a sentence of your own. Do not just leave floating quotations in your essays.
2. Introduce quotations with signal phrases which is separated from the quotation by a comma:
  - Incorrect: John Wright was very authoritative and possessive. “I don’t know as what his wife wanted makes much difference to John.” ( page 113)
  - Correct: John Wright was very authoritative and possessive. **Mr. Hale says**, “I don’t know as what his wife wanted makes much difference to John.” (page 113)
  - Notice the signal phrase highlighted in the Correct Example. Signal words are in present tense.
3. Weave the quote into the sentence. Often, you won’t need any punctuation before the quote:
  - Mr. Hale reveals that Mrs. Wright’s needs did not “make much difference to John.” (page 113)
  - Glaspell writes that as a young woman, Minnie Foster “ was kind of like a bird herself.” (page 141)
4. Set the quote up with a colon. Use this method only if the introduction to the quotation is a complete sentence. If you use a comma instead of a colon, you will have committed a serious grammatical error—a comma splice. Be careful not to confuse a colon (:) with a semicolon (;).
  - Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters discuss what may have provoked Mrs. Wright to murder her husband: “If there’d been years and years of nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful—still, after the bird was still.” (page 142)
5. Do not quote any more than is necessary; pick the “gold nugget” from the quote and just use that. Using only short phrases from the novels will keep you from making major grammatical errors. Also, including too much quoted material can take away from the points you are trying to make.
  - The women decide that Mrs. Wright was going to “knot” her quilt. (page 144)
6. If what you are quoting is already in quotations (that is, dialogue), you must put double quotes around the main part and single quotes around the dialogue.
  - Sammy begins to assert his independence when he says to Lengel **“ ‘I quit.’ ”** (page 827)

7. Notice the punctuation marks that are used with quotations. The **only two** punctuation marks used to introduce quotations are a colon and a comma. A semicolon is never used.
8. Question marks and exclamation points go outside the final quotation mark if the punctuation mark is part of your sentence—your question or your exclamation (“like this?”). Those marks go inside the final quotation marks if they are part of the original—the writer’s question or exclamation (“like this!”).
9. If you need to omit any part of the quote, use ellipsis marks (. . .). Normally, you will use these when you omit a portion of the middle of the quote. Only use ellipses at the beginning or end of a quotation if the quote has the appearance of being a complete sentence.
  - EX: Sammy calls the woman a “witch . . . [who] if she’d been born at the right time, they would have burned her over in Salem.” (page 824)
  - EX: Faulkner indicates a change will occur when he writes, “. . . soon there would be sun.” ( page 742)
10. It is acceptable in quotations to make editorial changes such as capitalization, verb tense, or clarification as long as the altered material is enclosed in **brackets**.(brackets, not parentheses)
  - Sammy calls the woman a “witch . . . [who] if she’d been born at the right time, they would have burned her over in Salem.” (page 824)
11. Always make sure it is clear why you’ve selected a quotation from the text. Explain its importance; do not just stick it in there without any type of commentary.