

# Basics of Source and Quote Formatting (APA)

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## WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial covers the basics of referencing and quoting sources. It explains how to reference the author and title of a source, and addresses basic formatting (including block quotes). It also considers how and when to use ellipses in quotations, and concludes with a discussion of summaries and paraphrases.

This tutorial provides basic information on source and quotation formatting in six parts:

1. Referencing Source Authors
2. Referencing Source Titles
3. Quotation Formatting Basics
4. Block Quotation Formatting Basics
5. Ellipses and Quoting
6. Summarizing and Paraphrasing

## 1. Referencing Source Authors

To provide context for readers, writers often refer to, or reference, the author(s) of a source, before quoting it or explaining the ideas it contains. Here are some basic guidelines:

- The first time an author's name is used, it should include the first and last names. Only the last name should be used in subsequent references.
- The authors of sources that have multiple authors should be referenced in the order in which they appear in the source, and in your bibliography.
- Don't use titles when referring to authors (e.g., "Dr.", "Mr.", etc.).

Following is a sample reference to an author:

John Waterweight argues that there is no such thing as dehydration, only a condensation of blood. Even though the medical community seems to disagree with him, Waterweight has acquired a

following, if only in some online circles.

Note that this fictional writer (i.e., Waterweight) is first referenced by his full name. Subsequently, only his last name is used.

## 2. Referencing Source Titles

Source titles are also commonly referenced before a quotation, summary, or paraphrase. Writers often mention the source title and author at the same time. Here are basic guidelines for referencing titles:

- For titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, films, and albums, use italics.
- For titles of articles, essays (including individual written work found online), short stories, poems, and songs, use quotation marks.



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The best way to remember these rules is that if the source is a *whole* thing, use italics; if it's a *part* of a larger thing, use quotation marks.

Here's another sample reference:

In his album *Bigger, Better, and Balder*, rapper Herschel Kiss promotes respect for elders. The message of his song "In the Eyes of your Momma" really hits home for me.

In this reference, the album (i.e., the whole) is presented in italics; the song (i.e., the piece, or part) is shown within quotation marks.

## 3. Quotation Formatting Basics

A quotation — text that has been taken from a source for use in an essay or other written work — must always be enclosed by quotation marks. This tells readers that the words within quotation marks are not the writer's words, but come from another source and have been included because they support the writer's purposes in some way.

To promote transparency for readers and fairness for writers, bibliographic information must always be provided after a quotation, in keeping with the assigned formatting style. This information should be within parentheses to separate it from the rest of sentence while informing readers of the source of the quotation.

Always use sentence-closing punctuation: for example, a period after the parentheses, or a comma if the sentences continue after the quotation. If any information precedes the quotation, it should be followed by a comma or colon *before* the quotation begins.

Consider this example, in which the quotation has been correctly formatted and referenced:

Going against the tide of popular opinion, she writes: "I refuse to admit that butter is best served on the upper side of toast, no matter the personal cost" (Hinkler, 1989, p. 478).

Notice the punctuation used in this example, in the following order:

1. A colon before the quotation begins
2. A closing quotation mark immediately after the quoted material
3. An open-parenthesis before the author's last name, comma, the year of publication, another comma, "p", which stands for page or pages followed by a period, and the number of the page from which the quotation was taken, followed by a close-parenthesis
4. A period to end the sentence

Here is another quotation, one that has been inserted near the middle of a sentence:

Another disagrees, "About the issue of toast there can be no alternative but that butter should face the sky" (Watkins, 1992, p. 12), but adds that while butter is a closed door, there remain possibilities for jam manipulation.

In this example, the principles guiding the use of punctuation are the same: the only difference occurs at the end of the quotation where a comma "stands in" for a period. The period In this example doesn't come until *after* the information that the writer has added following the quotation.

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## 4. Block Quotation Formatting Basics

According to the APA formatting requirements, quotations longer than 40 words must be formatted as block quotations. The quoted material must begin on a new line that is indented 1/2 inch, which is called blocking. Because this format provides a significant visual cue, block quotes don't use quotation marks. They do, however, require parentheses around the bibliographic data, which must be included at the end of the quotation. The final punctuation should be inserted at the end of the quotation, and there should be no punctuation whatsoever following the parentheses. After the block quote, the paragraph should continue without indentation.

Here's an example that includes a block quotation, preceded and followed by part of the surrounding paragraph:

This, then is the question: what is the comfort of people worth when compared to a national language? Or to ask it more bluntly:  
How many people today live in a language that is not their own, or no longer, or not yet, know their own language, and know poorly the major language they are forced to use? This is the problem for many people around the world, the problem of received communication. (Duattri, 2004, p. 13)  
Here we can see the problem inherent in allowing governments to control the language of their people...

The essay continues, following the ellipses. The way in which the block quotation is separated from surrounding text (as in this example) makes the use of quotation marks unnecessary. Note that the parentheses at the end come *after* the punctuation but *before* the writer's essay resumes on the next line (without indentation). This informs readers that the paragraph that precedes the block quote continues after it.

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## 5. Ellipses and Quoting

Ellipses are a way for writers to get the most out of their sources. Ellipses can be used in regular or block quotations to show that information has been omitted from a quotation. An ellipsis is three periods in a row, separated by spaces.

When removing information — and using ellipses to show that information has been removed — make sure that you use the source's words accurately and ethically. Ellipses are only required in the *middle* of quoted material.: If only part of a sentence is being used, there's no need to use ellipses to indicate that the beginning of the quotation is not the beginning of the source's sentence, or at the end to signal that the sentence continues in the source. Readers can assume that a good amount of text came before and after the quoted material.

Here's an example of a quotation that includes an ellipsis:

My mom said Grandpa was a product of The Great Depression...but I never understood what she meant until I found out he'd donated thousands of dollars to our business, just to keep it afloat.

Here's the sentence from which the preceding quotation was taken, in its entirety. Do you see anything that was left out of the quotation?

My Mom said Grandpa was a product of The Depression, and that he was amazingly cheap and incredibly generous, but I never understood what she meant until I found out he'd donated thousands of dollars to her business, just to keep it afloat.

The part that has been omitted is the part of the sentence that is the least important, in the writer's opinion. Readers can understand the meaning of the source information just as well without it. Therefore, this is fair and ethical use of an ellipsis, because the meaning of the source has not been changed.

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## 6. Summarizing and Paraphrasing

When summarizing or paraphrasing a source, writers must include the same bibliographic information, according to the same formatting rules, as when quoting. Quotation marks are not required, because paraphrases and summaries do not make direct use of the source's words. Instead, they explain or interpret source information in the writer's own words.

Summaries and paraphrases never use block formatting, no matter how long they are, since they must not be separated from the rest of the content. When including summaries and paraphrases, all that is required is to

identify the source of the information.

Here's an example of a summary.

Though it shies away from actually calling for any kind of broad, systemic change, there remains a subtle argument against allowing anything like a monarchy to ever come to power again (Ornassien, 1982, p. 2).

The information is presented without quotation marks because these are the writer's words — not those of the source.



## SUMMARY

This tutorial discussed the formatting of quotations and other source references. The basic guidelines for referencing a source's author and title, as well as formatting requirements for quotations and block quotations, were considered. The correct use of ellipses, summaries, and paraphrases was also examined. An understanding of how and when to use these tools enables writers to make fair and accurate use of research sources.

Source: Adapted from Sophia Instructor Gavin McCall