

# Ellipses and Brackets

## Ellipses . . .

An ellipsis (plural: ellipses) is three periods in a row with spaces between each period. It signals omissions (words, lines, or paragraphs) in quoted material.

- Do not use an ellipsis to change the meaning of, or misrepresent, the original source of the quoted material.
- You do not need to use an ellipsis for content omitted at the beginning of a quotation.
- You might not need to use an ellipsis for content omitted at the end of a quotation, depending on the style guide (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) that you are using; check the guide to know for certain.
- An ellipsis should always be placed inside the quotation marks that encompass the material you are quoting, because it indicates omitted content from the quoted material.
- Consult your style guide for discipline-specific uses of ellipses and what to do about punctuation marks, especially periods, in quoted material.

When you are writing a paper, quote only the information you need to make your point. If you intend to comment on only three particular lines from a paragraph (not the whole paragraph), then quote only those lines.

For example, say you wanted to use the following quotation in a paper on Inuit art, but were interested in only the sentences relating to the artist's use of colour and depiction of Inuit women:

From her home, and eventually from a small studio in Qamani'tuaq, Oonark's complex and vivid visual world unfolded. She employed bright colours in her depiction of humans, spirits and animals, creating vibrant works that draw the viewer in through pictorial storytelling. Often Oonark's visual narratives focus on Inuit women, conveying their strength and power within traditional depictions of domestic activities [3]. Discussing one of Oonark's early drawings, Robert Enright describes "the whimsical, awkward gestures the figures make", noting that, "the colours in the drawings speak unequivocally about Oonark's uncompromising celebration of Inuit life" [4]. (Inuit Art Quarterly; emphasis added).

To omit information within the quotation, use an ellipsis:

Oonark "employed bright colours ... creating vibrant works that ... often ... focus on Inuit women, conveying their strength and power . . . ." (Inuit Art Quarterly).

Note that the quotation above does not begin with the ellipsis. The quotation marks are sufficient to signal the beginning of your quoted material.

Use an ellipsis to indicate omissions in the middle and at the end (depending on your style guide) of a quoted sentence. If you have omitted words at the end of a quoted sentence, the ellipsis must be followed by a period (some style guides have different rules about the placement of punctuation marks in relation to ellipses; consult your style guide to be sure).

You should also use a period followed by an ellipsis to signal the omission of a complete sentence between included sentences in quoted material. That is, if you include the first and last sentences, but not the middle sentence, of three consecutive sentences in a passage you are quoting, you should place a period after the first sentence, follow it with an ellipsis, and then follow the ellipsis with the last sentence.

## Brackets [ ]

Use brackets to **insert** clarifying information into a quotation. Sometimes, for quotations to make **grammatical sense** in your sentence, it is necessary to insert extra information. Use brackets (not parentheses) to add any necessary verbs or phrases to the quotation. Here are two examples:

Enright notes, “the colours in the drawings [celebrate] Inuit life” (Inuit Art Quarterly).

*According to the Inuit Art Foundation, “[Oonark] employed bright colours in her depiction of humans, spirits and animals, creating vibrant works that draw the viewer in through pictorial storytelling”* (Inuit Art Quarterly).

Whenever you use quoted material, integrate it into the natural grammar of your sentence. Avoid free-floating quotations; instead, connect quoted material grammatically to your own writing. The integrated sentence should sound like a single, coherent sentence when read aloud (i.e. consistent verb tense, singulars and plurals etc.), not like two separate sentences jammed together.