Sometimes to integrate quotations smoothly into your work, you will need to omit words, condense material, or add needed words to a passage. Always use punctuation to alert readers to any changes you make to the original source.

For an overview of related key topics on quoting sources, visit the other videos and quizzes in this tutorial.

Explore It

When you create a quotation, you must copy it exactly as it appears in the original. But in situations where you need to make an alteration to a quotation, brackets and ellipses are punctuation that help you mark changes in quotations. Any words you add or change (to change a letter from uppercase to lowercase, for example) should be enclosed in brackets ([ ]). Use ellipses to indicate omissions from the original.

Original Source
According to Manning (2000), young individuals overspend with their credit cards because they perceive a great prevalence of credit card debt and/or a great amount of credit card debt in their social network. Accordingly, they view credit card debt-prone behavior as a “normal” occurrence in their social network.


Quotation (APA style)
In their review of research on credit card behavior, Sotiropoulos and Dastous (2012) suggest that young people “perceive a great prevalence of credit card debt and/or a great amount of credit card debt. . . . Accordingly, they view credit card debt-prone behavior as a ‘normal’ occurrence in their social network.”

Learn It

The ellipsis mark (three evenly spaced periods) is useful for signaling that you’ve omitted material from a quotation. If you omit a sentence or more, place a period (or other end punctuation mark) before the ellipsis mark. The following quotation (in APA style) indicates an omission of the end of the first sentence.

Economist Miron (2001) noted “A different perspective on drug use, independent of externalities, is that some consumers are not rational. . . . According to this view, policy-induced reductions in drug consumption benefit such people by preventing them from harming themselves.”

Note that because the source is an article from a database without page numbers, no page number is given after the quotation.

Do not use ellipses at the beginning of a quotation to indicate an omission from the beginning of a sentence. If you use ellipses at the end of a quotation to indicate that you are omitting the final words of the sentence in a quotation, include the parenthetical documentation after the ellipses and quotation mark and before the final period (as in this MLA style example).

According to Nutrition Health Review, recent legislation benefiting adoptive parents of special needs children is good news: “Families who adopted from 2005 to 2009 may be able to benefit from the refundable credit. . . .” (19).
Use brackets (sometimes known as square brackets) to insert your own words into a quotation for clarification. In this way you can indicate missing information or clarify a reference. The following example (in MLA style) shows how one student inserted words to clarify what is meant and to make the sentence grammatical.

Maccoun argues that tobacco prohibition could lead to a “large black market [for cigarettes] that might be tolerable if it reduced premature deaths by even, say, one-quarter” (180).

Brackets can also be used to indicate when you have changed a letter in a word from uppercase to lowercase. In addition, the bracketed word *sic*, which means “written exactly as printed,” shows that there is an error (in grammar or spelling) in a quotation (and indicates that the error is in the source and did not originate with you). Insert the word *sic* in brackets, in italics immediately after the error: “. . . nobel [*sic*].”

**Check your grammar**  Always take great care when using ellipses or brackets to make changes to a quotation. Once you’ve made alterations to a quotation, make sure that the passage that remains when you make your changes is grammatically complete and correct. Also take care when making alterations to a quotation not to change the original source’s meaning.

### Use It

Imagine that you are working on a paper about the state of race relations in the American South prior to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The following excerpt is taken from a scholarly book examining the effects of the Supreme Court’s rulings on matters related to race.

The national government’s position on civil rights shifted dramatically during the 1940s, reflecting the increase in black political power, the antifascist ideology of the war, and the Cold War imperative for racial change (185).

—Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*

After reading the excerpt, write a brief paragraph about it, integrating a quotation. Using either ellipses or brackets, make sure you integrate the quotation appropriately using a relevant signal phrase and in-text citation (following the documentation style you are using for a current research project). When you are done, check your work to be sure the paragraph is punctuated carefully and is grammatically correct. If you are unsure about the punctuation or other sentence-level concerns, check a grammar handbook or ask your instructor for help.


