

# Using the Ellipsis

## *What are ellipses?*

Ellipses consist of three periods with a space before each period and after the last one: [ ... ]. They are used to indicate that material has been omitted from an exact quote. Ellipses can also indicate a pause or hesitation in thinking in creative writing.

## *Format ellipses by...*

### ⇒ **Using the ellipsis to indicate omitted material**

However, do not use an ellipsis if the omitted material comes at the beginning of the quote.

## *Ellipses look like...*

- *Investigative researcher Jim Marrs writes, “Various discrepancies in Oswald’s military records...support the idea that Oswald was given set intelligence training” (112).*

### ⇒ **Placing a period behind the ellipsis if an entire sentence has been removed**

Complete sentences must precede and follow the ellipsis.

- *As Pfaff points out, “But the meaning of class is dangerous ground for an American .... There is an identifiable upper class in Britain with an aristocratic ethos and a hereditary base” (39).*

### ⇒ **Ending a quote with an ellipsis only if part of the final sentence of the quote is omitted.**

- *Roman Polanski recalls, “Although I was never questioned about the tape, I should no doubt be accused of concealing a significant aspect of our lifestyle....” (298).*

### ⇒ **Using the ellipsis to indicate the omission of a line of poetry**

As with prose, if the poetry quotation ends with an ellipsis, include a fourth period. Then follow with the parenthetical citation.

- *T.S. Eliot puts Nancy Ellicott under a microscope to show the difference between performance and authenticity: “Miss Nancy Ellicott smoked/ And danced all the modern dances/ ... / But [her aunts] knew that it was modern” (7-10).*

### ⇒ **Placing them in creative writing pieces to indicate a pause or hesitation in speech**

Ellipses may also indicate an incomplete thought.

- *The wounded soldier’s final, whispered words were, “Tell Jenny I love...”*