



For MLA style papers, quotations that run more than four typed lines should be introduced. Start the quote in a new line, indenting it one inch, or ten spaces. Keep the right margin even with the rest of the text, double space the quote, and do not use quotation marks around the passage.

**Note:** Use a colon at the end of the introductory statement only if it is a complete sentence.

Martin Luther King, Jr. ends his “Dream” speech with a rousing call to freedom for all people:

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “Free at last! free at last! thank God almighty, we are free at last!” (680)

For more information about using quotations in an essay, see

*The Everyday Writer*, 3rd Edition

Section 46c (page 339)



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## *Quoting Prose in an Essay*



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## Mini-Lesson # 20

**Use exact quotes when the author's words are so familiar or so well said that paraphrasing would not do them justice.**

Writing teachers say we “write to learn,” but novelist E. M. Forster said it best: “How do I know what I think until I see what I say?”

*Note: The first word of a quotation is capitalized when the quote is a complete sentence; otherwise, it is not (See “write” and “how” above).*

**In direct quotes, reproduce quotations exactly as they are printed in the original source. If you add clarification, your text must be bracketed within the quote.**

The speaker proclaimed, “No document is as important to Americans as our [Bill of] Rights.”

In her essay, Mary wrote, “John Lennon [*sic*], one of the Beatles, was murdered.”

*Note: As is shown above, use [*sic*] to indicate that you have quoted a passage correctly, even though the spelling or some other aspect of the writing is incorrect in the original source.*

**Quotes must be grammatically correct in sentences. It may be easier to quote only part of the original sentence and to paraphrase the rest.**

In his “I Have a Dream” speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned a time when “even the state of Mississippi [. . .] will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.”

Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned the racial hatred in the state of Mississippi “transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.”

**The bracketed ellipsis—[...]—in quotations indicates material has been omitted from the original sentence:**

Original sentence: “I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.”

**Avoid overusing quotations. Too many can drown out your voice and give the impression that you have no original ideas of your own.**

**Quotations may be at the end, in the beginning, or in the middle of a sentence.**

“That one day even the state of Mississippi [. . .] will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice” was one of the dreams in the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned the day when “even the state of Mississippi [. . .] will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice,” which he stated in his “I Have a Dream” speech.

**Quotations can add authority to papers, but they should be used judiciously — and correctly! All quotes should be attributed, using in-text citations and a works cited page. See Mini-Lesson #15, "Using MLA Style Documentation" for details.**

