

FORMAL WRITING CONVENTIONS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

- 1. All final drafts of essays should be double-spaced and written in ink.**
- 2. All words within a **title** should be **capitalized**.** Titles of **short works** (short stories, poems, articles, short films & TV episodes) should always be presented inside “**Quotation Marks**.” Titles of **longer works** (books, plays, speeches, full-length films & TV programs) **should be** written in ***italics* or underlined** (if writing by hand).
- 3. Do not use contractions and abbreviations.** Always write words and names out in full. Rather than writing *don't, can't, wouldn't, isn't, he's*, write them out in full: *do not, cannot, would not, is not, he is*. In addition, abbreviations are helpful in communicating information quickly, but your reader may not know what you are referencing. Abbreviations or acronyms such as the *WHO*, should be written out as the *World Health Organization*.
- 4. Use specific and concrete language. Avoid vague words and phrases** that may leave the reader questioning your meaning, as they have multiple meanings attached to them and lack clarity. For example, the following are vague: *thing, stuff, it, sort of, kind of, really, very, a lot, good, bad, big, small, happy, sad, etc.*
- 5. When you reference an author or character in your essay for the first time, you must always write their full name** (e.g. *Ray Bradbury*). After the first mention, you can simply use the last name of the author (*Ray Bradbury* → *Bradbury*); for characters use the name used most frequently throughout the text (*Monica Swinton* → *Monica*)
- 6. Placing punctuation marks, brackets, and punctuation when citing a text:**

If you are using a primary source (an original text) put the page number in brackets after a quotation. When ending a quote, put the quotation mark first, then the bracketed page number, then the period.

- *Sly uses the clay as a coping mechanism, and uses it to "silence his thoughts" (2).*

If your quote includes a question mark or exclamation point this punctuation will be written inside the quotation marks, followed by the bracketed page number, followed by a period.

- *Throughout the story, David continually seeks comfort and support from Teddy by asking, "How do you tell what are real things from what aren't real things?" (2).*

If you create a question containing a quotation, the punctuation would also outside of the quotation marks.

- *Do the majority of people make an effort to empathize with nature, to understand the "hellish limbo where [they] live" (2)?*

7. When quoting dialogue & narration together, put single quotation marks (‘ ’) around the dialogue, and double quotations (“ ”) around the entire quote.

- *The story ends “Among the ruins, one wall stood alone. Within the wall, a last voice said, over and over again and again, even as the sun rose to shine upon the heaped rubble and steam: ‘Today is August 5, 2026, today is August 5, 2026, today is...’” (4).*

8. When quoting four or more lines of a text, set the quote off from the body of your text by indenting ten spaces from the left. Then, you can *single space* that quote to more clearly differentiate it from the rest of your writing.

The author illustrates Sly’s adoration of the clay in the following:

“The wheel spun. Clay slid between his fingers. Soft. Firm and smooth. The smell of earth lived in his nostrils. He held the world in his hands. Turning, turning, the walls rose around a kernel of anger, subsuming it. His heart slowed with the wheel and Sly blinked, becoming aware again as if he were slipping out of sleep. The vase on the wheel still seemed to dance with life. Its walls held the shape of the world within them. He passed a finger across the rim” (3).

This description shows...

9. If you need to remove information, you need to do so using an ellipsis (...) to show that you have removed information from a longer quotation.

- *“The wheel spun. Clay slid between his fingers. Soft. Firm and smooth. The smell of earth lived in his nostrils. He held the world in his hands. Turning, turning, the walls rose around a kernel of anger, subsuming it. His heart slowed with the wheel and Sly blinked, becoming aware again as if he were slipping out of sleep” (3).*
- *“The wheel spun. Clay slid between his fingers... his heart slowed with the wheel” (3).*

10. If you need to add or change information to a quotation (for grammatical purposes) use square brackets to indicate change.

- *“The house stood alone in a city of rubble and ashes. This was the one house left standing” (1).*
- *In Bradbury’s short story, he describes the house as “[standing] alone in a city of rubble and ashes. [It] was the one house left standing” (1).*

11. When to put additional information inside a citation.

If you are writing about more than one text (and more than one author), you will need to use the author’s name as well as the page number inside the brackets. If you are quoting information from an online source, include the website name and date.

- *The short story includes a house that completes all trivial tasks for the humans that live inside: "In the kitchen the breakfast stove gave a hissing sigh and ejected from its warm interior eight pieces of perfectly browned toast, eight eggs sunnyside up, sixteen slices of bacon, two coffees, and two cool glasses of milk" (Bradbury, 1).*
- *According to Alex Smith, a journalist for the Canadian Broadcasting Company, "British Columbia experienced a record low in wildfires in 2020" (CBC.com, 2021).*

12. How to integrate a quotation:

You cannot simply insert a quotation on its own. You need to integrate it into a **full sentence**, so it reads smoothly and appears connected to your thoughts and analysis. This is also referred to as: providing context for your evidence.

A. Introduce the quotation with a complete sentence and a colon (:).

Do not confuse this with a semi-colon (;), which can NEVER be used to introduce a quotation in any context.

- *Henry David Thoreau ends his novel using a simple metaphor: "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in" (259).*
- *The author's philosophy is summed up best by his repeated request for people to ignore the insignificant details of life: "Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!" (104).*

B. Use an introductory or explanatory phrase, but not a complete sentence, separated from the quotation with a comma (,).

You should use a comma to separate your own words from the quotation when your introductory or explanatory phrase ends with a **verb** or a **short phrase** such as:

says	reveals	remarks
states	argues	recalls
writes	discusses	questions
notes	explores	asserts
claims	points out	confirms
asserts	demonstrates	concludes
proposes	thinks	reports
comments	depicts	portrays
conveys	emphasizes	recognizes
explains	believes	maintains
expresses	observes	
describes	shows	According to _____,
mentions	suggests	In the words of _____,
implies	alludes to	In _____ view,
evokes	implies	From _____ perspective,

- *In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states directly his purpose for going into the woods when **he states**, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (23).*

- **Thoreau questions**, "Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life?" (79).
- **According to Thoreau**, "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us" (58).

C. Fuse the quotation into part of your own sentence without any punctuation between your own words and the words you are quoting.

In this case, the first word in the quote does not need to be capitalized.

You can use **key words to parse the sentence** or the word **that** to fuse your sentence/thought and the quotation together.

- *According to Thoreau, **people are often "thrown** off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails" (137).*
- *Thoreau argues **that** "shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous" (89).*

D. Use short quotations—only a few words—as part of your own sentence.

When you integrate quotations in this way, you **do not** use any special punctuation. Instead, you should punctuate the sentence just as you would if all of the words were your own.

- *In "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau states that his retreat to the woods around Walden Pond was motivated by his desire "to live deliberately" and to face only "the essential facts of life" (62).*
- *Thoreau argues that people blindly accept "shams and delusions" as the "soundest truths," while regarding reality as "fabulous" (89).*

*****NOTE:**

When proofreading your writing and reviewing your quote integration, make sure each of your quotes include the following:

CONTEXT + JOINING WORDS/ PUNCTUATION + "QUOTE" + (CITATION).