

How to Cite Shakespeare in MLA

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In-text Citations

- When citing Shakespeare plays, list the ACT, SCENE, and LINES in parenthetical citations:
 - Page numbers are NOT included, separated by periods
- Enclose the citation in parentheses
 - Example:
 - *(Macbeth 1.3.14-17)* refers to Act 1, Scene 3, Lines 14 to 17 of Macbeth

In-text Citations

- **When to Use the Author's Name & Title of the Work:**
 - **When a paper refers to one work, use the author's last name in the parenthetical citation**
 - **Example:**
 - **In a paper on Othello when quoting only that play, Shakespeare would be used in the citation:**
 - *(Shakespeare 3.3.165-171)*
 - **When a paper refers to more than one work, use the play's title:**
 - **In a paper on Shakespeare's tragedies such as, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, use the play's name in the citation:**
 - *(Hamlet 3.2.115) or (Ham. 3.2.115)*

In-text Citations

- After introducing the full play title in parentheses, it is acceptable to use MLA- approved abbreviations for any later citations:

Plays:	Abbreviations	Plays	Abbreviations
Much Ado about Nothing	(Ado.)	Henry IV, Part 2	(2H4)
Anthony and Cleopatra	(Ant.)	Henry V	(H5)
All's Well That Ends Well	(AWW)	Henry VI, Part 1	(1H6)
As You Like It	(AYL)	Henry VI, Part 2	(2H6)
The Comedy of Errors	(Err.)	Henry VI, Part 3	(3h6)
Hamlet	(Ham.)	Henry VIII	(H8)
Henry IV, Part 1	(1H4)	Julius Caesar	(JC)
Love's Labour's Lost	(LLL)	Richard II	(R2)

In-text Citations

- **MLA- approved abbreviations for citations (Contd.)**

Plays:	Abbreviations	Plays	Abbreviations
King Lear	(Lr.)	Richard III	(R3)
Macbeth	(AWW)	Romeo and Juliet	(Rom.)
A Midsummer's Night Dream	(MND)	The Taming of the Shrew	(Shr.)
Merchant of Venice	(MV)	Sonnets	(Son.)
Othello	(Oth.)	Titus Andronicus	(Tit.)
Pericles	(Per.)	The Tempest	(Temp.)
The Twelfth Night	(TN)	The Merry Wives of Windsor	(Wiv.)
The Winter's Tale	(WT)		

Using Roman or Arabic Numerals

- According to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Projects:
 - Use Arabic numerals rather than Roman numerals for division and page numbers
 - Use Roman numerals when citing pages of a preface or another section that are so numbered
 - But designate volumes, parts, books, and chapters with Arabic numerals even if your source does not
 - Use Roman numerals for citations of acts and scenes in plays:
 - *(i.e. King Lear IV.i)*
 - But if the assignment does not require this practice, use Arabic numerals:
 - *(i.e. King Lear 4.1)*

Formatting Work Cited Page

- Citing a Play Published as a **Book**:
- Author. *Title of Play*. Editor or Translator (if applicable). City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Ed. Tom Smith. Oxford: Globe Theater Press, 2005. Print.
- Citing a Play Published in an **Anthology**:
- Author. *Title of Play*. *Title of Anthology*. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Page Numbers of the Anthology on Which the Play Appears. Medium of Publication.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. *A Collection of Great Drama*. Ed. Tom Smith. Oxford: Globe Theater Press, 2005. 1235-1298. Print.

Guidelines For Quoting Prose & Verse: Three Lines or Fewer

- When Quoting Three Lines or Fewer:
- Quoting **Prose**:
- If a prose quotation runs **three lines or fewer**, put it in quotation marks and incorporate it in the text
 - *The immensely impish Falstaff tells the Prince: “When I was about thy years, Hal, I was not an eagle’s talon in the waist; I could have crept into any alderman’s thumb ring” (1H4 2.4.325–27).*
- Quoting **Verse**:
- When quoting **two or three lines of verse**, use a slash with a space on each side [/] to separate them
 - *Claudius alludes to the story of Cain and Abel when describing his crime: “It hath the primal eldest curse upon’t, / A brother’s murder” (Ham. 3.3.37–38).*

Guidelines For Quoting Prose : Four Lines or More

- When Quoting Prose in Four Lines or More :
- Indent your quotation: These are commonly referred to as **block quotations**
- The lines should be arranged as a paragraph if you are quoting prose:
 - In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick reflects on what he has overheard Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio say:

This can be no trick. The conference was sadly borne. They have the truth of this from Hero. They seem to pity the lady. It seems her affections have their full bent. Love me? Why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censured. They say I will bear myself proudly if I perceive the love come from her; they say too that she will rather die than give any sign of affection (2.3.217–24).

- No need to include the **title of the play** in this parenthetical citation as the author notes it **directly before the quote**

Guidelines For Quoting Verse : Four Lines or More

- When Quoting Verse in Four Lines or More :
- Indent your quotation: These are commonly referred to as block quotations
- The lines should be arranged as they appear in the text if you are quoting prose:

- Jaques begins his famous speech by comparing the world to a theater:

All the world's a stage

And all the men and women merely players:

They have their exits and their entrances;

And one man in his time plays many parts,

His acts being seven ages (AYL 2.7.138–42).

- While quoting a verse, the original spacing — in this case the long indentation in the first line — is maintained

Guidelines For Quoting Dialogue

- When Quoting **Dialogue** :
- Begin each part of the dialogue with the appropriate character's name indented one inch from the left margin
- It should be written in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS
- Follow the name with a period, and start the quotation
- Indent all subsequent lines in the character's speech an additional quarter inch
- When the dialogue shifts to another character, start a new line indented one inch from the left margin
- Maintain this pattern throughout the entire quotation:

- HAMLET. *Then is doomsday near. But your news is not*

true. Let me question more in particular. What have you,

my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune,

That she sends you to prison hither?

- GUILDENSTERN. *Prison, my lord?* (Ham. 2.2.231-235).

Further Guidelines For Quotation Format

- Use a colon — most abrupt transition between the quotation and the rest of the essay
- Use a comma — eases the transition between your introduction of the quotation and the quotation itself
- Usually, a comma is preceded by a transition such as a dialogue descriptor:
 - Example: *This confusion occurs when Juliet says, “insert quotation here.”*
- Paraphrase — expresses the key events, images, characterization, or dialogue of a passage from the text in your own words
- This needs to be cited, as you are directly referencing a specific point in the text, although summarizing it in your own words
- This format works well for longer passages, or a series of events in the plot that are being linked by your argument

Further Guidelines For Quotation Format (Contd.)

- **Integrate — expresses the key events, images, characterization, or dialogue of a passage from the text:**
 - **Through combining your own words with the text itself**
- **This is useful when:**
 - **There are multiple characters speaking**
 - **Or, a lengthy passage needs to be shortened by:**
 - **Taking the main ideas from the beginning of the quotation**
 - **Paraphrasing the context of the middle, and the direct text from the end of the quotation**

Further Guidelines For Quotation Format (Contd.)

- An ellipsis [...] indicates the omission of words, phrases, or sentences from within a quoted passage
- An ellipsis should always be three dots unless it's at the end of the sentence; then, the fourth dot is the period
- You can use an ellipsis at the start of a sentence, in the middle, or at the end
- Because it demands the reader slow down, an ellipsis should be used sparingly
- Rules for spacing an ellipsis depend on the requirements of the editor
- However, it's generally acceptable to include no spaces between the ellipsis and the words directly adjacent to it
- Most style guides call for no spaces between the ellipsis points (i.e., ...), but some may allow for spaces (i.e., . . .)
- An ellipsis can also indicate material left out of a quote, so it's a helpful
- Some printings of William Shakespeare's famous tragedy **Hamlet** feature the use of a **three-dot ellipsis**, while others use a dash for an ellipsis:

*To the next abstinence: the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either . . . the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night:
And when you are desirous to be bless'd,
I'll blessing beg of you.*

Further Guidelines For Quotation Format (Contd.)

- Square Brackets:
- They are useful when the pronouns within the quotations are affecting the flow of the sentence:
 - rendering the transition between what you have written and the quotation awkward
- Change a personal pronoun (I, me, my, etc.) or an unspecific pronoun (he, she, it) to an impersonal pronoun
 - Or to a more specific noun
 - Example:
 - A quotation spoken by Juliet may begin with “*I*”
 - However, this may need to be changed to [*she*] or [*Julie*] for added clarity within the context of the paragraph

MLA Works Cited Entries for Shakespeare Plays

- Play Published as a Standalone Book
 - An individual edition of a particular play will usually list an editor; include their name if so
 - **Format:**
 - Shakespeare, William. *Play Title*. Edited by Editor first name Last name, Publisher, Year.
 - Works Cited entry
 - Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Edited by Stephen Orgel, Oxford UP, 2008.
 - In-text citation
 - (Shakespeare 1.2.321–324)

MLA Works Cited Entries for Play Published in a Collection

- When using a collection of all or several of Shakespeare's works, but only citing one of them:
 - You can specify which one in your **Works Cited** entry
- **Format**
 - Shakespeare, William. *Play Title*. *Collection Title*, edition, edited by Editor first name Last name, Publisher, Year, pp. Page range.
- **Works Cited** entry
 - Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night*. *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3rd ed., edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Norton, 2016, pp. 1907–1971.
- **In-text citation**
 - (Shakespeare 3.2.20–25)

MLA Works Cited Entries for Play Published in a Collection (Contd.)

- When using a collection and citing several different works within it:
 - just include one **Works Cited** entry and **specify** the **individual works cited** in your in-text citations
- **Format**
 - Shakespeare, William. *Collection Title*. **Edition**, edited by Editor **first** name **Last** name, **Publisher**, **Year**.
- Works Cited entry
 - Shakespeare, William. *The Norton Shakespeare*. **3rd ed.**, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, **Norton**, **2016**.
- In-text citation
 - (**TN** 3.2.20–25)

Frequently Asked Questions

- Should I use **page numbers** in a Shakespeare citation in MLA?
 - No, do not use page numbers in your MLA in-text citations of Shakespeare plays
 - Instead, **specify** the **act**, **scene**, and **line numbers** of the quoted material, **separated by periods**
 - Example:
 - (Shakespeare 3.2.20–25)
 - This **makes it easier** for the reader to **find** the **relevant passage** in **any edition** of the **text**

Frequently Asked Questions (Contd.)

- How do I cite multiple Shakespeare plays in an MLA paper?
 - When citing multiple Shakespeare plays throughout your MLA paper:
 - The in-text citation begins with an abbreviated version of the title
 - Example:
 - (*Oth.* 1.2.4).
 - List the edition (s) you used (such as a collection, or individual editions of different plays) in the Works Cited page
 - If you cite only one Shakespeare play in your paper, you should include a Works Cited entry for that play
 - Your in-text citations should start with the author's name:
 - Example:
 - (*Shakespeare* 1.1.4).

References

Citing Shakespeare in MLA Form. (n.d.). *Fenwick High School*. Fenwick Friars. Retrieved on February 10, 2021, from: <https://bit.ly/3ecxK9F>.

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