

## Ellipses

### APSU Writing Center Handout

An ellipsis (. . .) is a series of three periods used to:

- Show omitted words in a quotation
- Replace sentences or sections of text
- Indicate hesitation, suspense, or trailing thoughts
- Show a sudden shift in topic

An ellipsis **does not** change the meaning of the quoted material.

### Common Uses

#### Omitting Words or Sections

Ellipses can shorten a quote while keeping its meaning.

#### Example 1:

**Original:** “Yesterday, after careful consideration and thought, she enrolled in the class.”

**Ellipses:** “Yesterday ... she enrolled in the class.”

#### Example 2:

**Original:** “Please clean up the mess your team left in the locker rooms before you go home today.”

**Ellipses:** “Please clean up the mess ... before you go home today.”

#### Hesitation or Trailing Thoughts

Ellipses can show a pause, uncertainty, or a sentence trailing off.

**Example 1:**

**Original:** “I don’t know what time we should go to the grocery. I’ll have to think about it.”

**Ellipses:** “I don’t know what time we should go to the grocery ...”

**Example 2:**

**Original:** “They were devastated. They were confused. They had never been in this situation before.”

**Ellipsis:** “They were devastated ... confused ... they had never been in this situation before.”

**APA 7th Edition Guidelines**

**Omitting material:** Use three periods with spaces (. . .) or the ellipsis character (...).

**Omitted sentence endings:** Use four periods (. . . .) to indicate the end of one sentence and the start of another omitted sentence.

**Adding material:** Enclose insertions or explanations in square brackets [like this].

**Emphasis:** Italicize words you want to emphasize, then add [emphasis added].

**Errors in quotes:** Indicate with [sic] immediately after the error.

Do not begin or end a paragraph with an ellipsis, and ellipses should not change the original meaning of the quote.

## References

APA Style. (2020). *Changes to Quotations*. American Psychological Association.

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammarguidelines/citations/quotations/changes#:~:text=Changes%20to%20a%20quotati on%20requiring,or%20tie%20two%20sentences%20together>).

Clark, S. (2011). *Ellipses*. San José State University Writing Center.

<https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Ellipses.pdf>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Ellipsis*. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ellipsis>

Snyder, N. (2023). *Using Ellipses to Omit Words from a Quotation*. Kathleen Jones White Writing Center. <https://www.iup.edu/writingcenter/writing-resources/punctuation/using-ellipses.html>