Mechanics Related to Using Sources

Always consult a writing handbook for any matters of grammar, punctuation, etc. that you are unsure of. Here is a list of the most common mechanical matters that come up when using sources.

- Use quotation marks when using the source’s own words. When paraphrasing, do not use quotation marks (though you still need to add a citation).

- When quoting, be sure the quoted material fits into the grammar of your sentence. The quotation marks don’t change anything structurally, so you can check by just imagining they aren’t there: if the sentence “reads” well, it’s OK; if not, make the necessary adjustments. You are allowed to make minor changes such as changing the tense of verbs and replacing pronouns with nouns to make them clearer.

- When you make such minor changes, indicate where you have done so by putting the altered word in brackets. For example, if your source says “walk” and you need “walked,” you would write it like this: “walk[ed].” You can also use brackets to add explanation of things that may not be clear out of their original context. (See examples on p. 117 of Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age.)

- When a parenthetical citation appears at the end of a sentence (or anywhere you would have punctuation), the citation comes before the period. (Hint for remembering: you haven’t finished your sentence until you’ve included the citation.)

- When the end of a quotation coincides with a place in a sentence where you need punctuation, the previous rule about the citation takes precedence. If there is no citation, apply these rules:
  - A comma or period goes inside the quotation marks.
  - A colon or semi-colon goes outside the quotation marks.
  - A question mark or exclamation point goes inside if it is part of the quoted material; it goes outside if it is not.

- If you have a long quotation (more than 4 lines on the page), indent the whole quotation. (Example: page 117 of Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age.)
  - The indentation takes the place of quotation marks. Don’t use both.
  - With a “block” quotation, the punctuation rule changes. End the quotation with a period, then add two spaces and the citation, with no further punctuation.
• If there are quotation marks already in the material you are quoting, change them to **single quotation marks** (as opposed to the double quotation marks that open and close the larger chunk). This avoids confusion.

• Quoted material should be reproduced exactly—even if there are mistakes in it—with two exceptions:
  
  ➢ Change the capital letter at the beginning of a sentence to lower case if it is not at the beginning of a sentence in your text.
  ➢ Omit, alter, or add punctuation at the end of a quotation to fit your sentence.

• If there is unneeded material within a quotation, you can leave it out (provided you don’t distort the meaning). Use **ellipses** dots (three periods separated by spaces) to indicate where you have done this. If the omitted section includes the end of a sentence (or an entire sentence), there should be a total of four periods. (Example: *Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age*, bottom of page 114.)

  You should also use ellipses if what you are quoting could be a complete sentence, but omits material at the beginning or end of the original sentence.