

Citing Shakespeare in MLA Format

In-text citations

What's included in parentheses?

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. For example:

(*Macbeth* 1.3.14-17) refers to Act 1, Scene 3, Lines 14 to 17 of *Macbeth*.

Do I use the author's name or the title of the work?

If writing about one play, use the author's last name in the parenthetical citation. However, if writing a paper that refers to more than one work, use the play's title. For example:

If one were to write a paper on Othello in which he or she quoted *only* that play, Shakespeare would be used in the citation.

- (Shakespeare 3.3.165-171)

If one were to write a paper about Shakespeare's tragedies in which the author quoted *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, use the play's name in the citation.

- (*Hamlet* 3.2.115) or (*Ham.* 3.2.115)★

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

★ ABBREVIATIONS

Ado	Much Ado about Nothing
Ant.	Anthony and Cleopatra
AWW	All's Well That Ends Well
AYL	As You Like It
Err.	The Comedy of Errors
Ham.	Hamlet
1H4	Henry IV, Part 1
2H4	Henry IV, Part 2
H5	Henry V
1H6	Henry VI, Part 1
2H6	Henry VI, Part 2
3H6	Henry VI, Part 3
H8	Henry VIII
JC	Julius Caesar
LLL	Love's Labour's Lost
Lr.	King Lear
Mac.	Macbeth
MND	A Midsummer Night's Dream
MV	Merchant of Venice
Oth.	Othello
Per.	Pericles
R2	Richard II
R3	Richard III
Rom.	Romeo and Juliet
Shr.	The Taming of the Shrew
Son.	Sonnets
Tit.	Titus Andronicus
Tmp.	The Tempest
TN	Twelfth Night
Wiv.	The Merry Wives of Windsor
WT	The Winter's Tale

For all Shakespeare abbreviations see section 7.7.2 in the *MLA Handbook*

The edition I have uses roman numerals to designate acts and scenes. Should I use roman numerals in my citation?

According to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Projects*:

In general, use arabic numerals rather than roman numerals for division and page numbers. Although you must use roman numerals when citing pages of a preface or another section that are so numbered, designate volumes, parts, books, and chapters with arabic numerals even if your source does not. Some instructors prefer roman numerals, however, **for citations of acts and scenes in plays (i.e. King Lear IV.i), but if your instructor does not require this practice, use arabic numerals (i.e. King Lear 4.1).**

PROPER FORMAT FOR WORKS CITED

Citing a Play Published as a Book

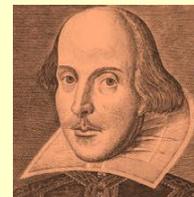
Author. *Title of Play*. Editor or Translator (if applicable). City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

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 VERSE, PROSE, and DIALOGUE

When Quoting Three Lines or Less....

QUOTING PROSE

If a prose quotation runs three lines or less, put it in quotation marks and incorporate it in the text.

The immensely obese 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).

When Quoting Four Lines or More....

When quoting more than three lines, you will need to 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 verse and arranged as a paragraph if you are quoting prose.**

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).

One does not need to include the title of the play in this parenthetical citation as the author notes it directly before the quote.

QUOTING VERSE

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).

Because this is verse, the original spacing – in this case the long indentation in the first line – remains.

When Quoting Dialogue...

Begin each part of the dialogue with the appropriate character’s name indented one inch from the left margin and 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).