Punctuation
for Research-Based Essays

Research: Getting your reader informed

- Joining a conversation of researchers and writers already in progress.

- Catching up on what's been learned or said so far.

- This means saying *who* said *what, when,* and *why!*

Quotations in MLA and APA Styles

- Quotations report what others have written or said so it can be analyzed clearly

- The words quoted should be very distinctive—a particular personality, or unique quality otherwise lost in paraphrase or summary

Research Quotes

- Use a signal phrase

- Put quotation marks where the author's words begin and end

- Indicate where the original source can be found

A Word or Two About Commas

Five reliable core rules based on sentence structure:

1. Intro, SV.
2. SV, {FANBOYS} SV.
3. S, insertion, V.
4. Lists: first item, second item, . . . and last item.
5. Tags

Signal phrases can be structured as 1, 2, 3, or 5!

Signal Phrases: The Dialogue Tag of Research

- In narratives, the *dialogue tag* identifies the speaker:

  - **Pre-quote:** The mayor said, "Today, we are starting free Internet access in the city!"

  - **Mid-quote:** "Today," said the mayor, "we are starting free Internet in the city!"

  - **Post-quote:** "Today, we are starting free internet access in the city!" announced the mayor.

Signal Phrase Punctuation

- In research-based writing, *signal phrases* identify the authors of work we are referring to: sometimes with colons, but more often with commas.

Signal Phrases

- **First time: introduce the author thoroughly**

  → **MLA:** Cornel West, Professor of Philosophy and Christian Practice at Union Theological Seminary and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University, says on his website, "Justice is what love looks like in public."

  → **APA:** Dr. Cornel West (2016), Professor of Philosophy and Christian Practice at Union Theological Seminary and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University, is quoted on his website saying that "Justice is what love looks like in public."

Signal Phrases

- **Subsequent quotes: just a tag**

  →**MLA:** "You can't lead the people if you don't love the people," says Dr. West.

  →**APA:** "You can't save the people if you don't serve the people," said Dr. West (2016).

Signal Phrase Examples in Two Styles

→**MLA:** English teachers usually have conflicting feelings when they read student papers. As Connors and Lunsford note, "Not even the most liberal of process-oriented teachers completely ignores the problem of mechanical and formal errors" (396).

→**APA:** English teachers usually have conflicted focus when they read student papers: "Not even the most liberal of process-oriented teachers completely ignores the problem of mechanical and formal errors" (Connors & Lunsford, 1988, p. 396).

Activity 1: Signal Phrase and Quotation

Using your own words or a publication as a source, compose a sentence that has a signal phrase and a quotation.

Other Punctuation in Research Writing

- Parentheses ( )
- Colons: slightly different between MLA and APA
- Semicolon;
- Square brackets [ ]
- "Double quotes" and 'Single quotes'
- Hyphen -
- Dash —

Parentheses: (pa-REN-thuh-seez)

- Information that is not essential to a sentence can be put in parentheses

- Anything in parentheses can be described as "parenthetical"

- When we need to provide information about the location of a source after the end of our sentences, that info goes in parentheses

- MLA: (Author last name #)

- APA: (Author last name, year, p. #)

Parenthetical Citations End Their Sentences

→ **MLA:** As Mina Shaughnessy put it, errors are "unintentional and unprofitable intrusions upon the consciousness of the reader. . . . They demand energy without giving back any return in meaning" (12).

→ **APA:** As Mina Shaughnessy (1977) put it, errors are "unintentional and unprofitable intrusions upon the consciousness of the reader" (p. 12).

Colons

- A statement that gives the reader a sense of anticipation or suspense may be followed by a colon and then the pay-off: the explanation.

  → The public is looking forward to one thing this year: the end of the campaign.

Colons: Other Uses

- **Between place of publication and publisher (in APA):**
  New York, NY: Wiley
  Boston, MA: Cambridge UP

- **Between Main title and subtitle:**
  2001: A Space Odyssey
  "Sturm und Drang: Why Americans Shouldn't Fret about Borrowed Words"

Colons: Differences of MLA and APA Styles

- **MLA:** only lower-case letters after a colon (unless a proper noun), even if a complete sentence

- **APA:** a capitalized complete sentence may follow a colon

Semicolons ;   versus   Colons :

- A semicolon is used most often for joining independent clauses: SV; SV.

  → This computer is prone to malfunction; however, I can't afford to replace it.

  → The legislature went into special session again; this time, however, some bills were actually passed.

Square Brackets: For Changes to Quotes

Square Brackets (or just "brackets") are for modifications or insertions into quotes.

Sometimes, it's to make them grammatical in new contexts:

> → "As Mina Shaughnessy [puts] it, errors are 'unintentional and unprofitable intrusions . . . '" (Connors & Lunsford, 1988, p. 396).

Square Brackets: For Clarifications in Quotes

They are also used to insert clarifications into a quote:

→ "Nevertheless, very few of us [teachers] can deny that an outright comma splice . . . distracts us" (Connors & Lunsford, 1988, p. 396).

Quotation Marks

- In the American style of punctuation, borrowed words are placed in quotation marks like these: " "
- They are used for article titles, within sentences, and in lists of references and works cited
- They are also sometimes used when introducing a coined term or a word used in an ironic manner

'Single Quotes'

- For the quotation of a quote in US publications
  - If the original text had quotation marks, then in *your* quotation of that text, those " " become single ' ' —inside the double quotes:
  - → **Original:** As Mina Shaughnessy put it, errors are "unintentional and unprofitable intrusions"
  - → **Quotation:** "As Mina Shaughnessy put it, errors are 'unintentional and unprofitable intrusions'" (Connors & Lunsford, 1988, p. 396).

Hyphens

- The hyphen is a short horizontal line: **-**
- It links two or more words that are working together as one kind of word, especially adjectives before the nouns they describe
  - → a full-time student
  - → my three-year-old daughter (also, just "my three-year-old")
  - → your mother-in-law
  - → our brothers-in-law

Dashes

- The dash is a horizontal line that's as long as the letter "M" is wide in whatever typeface you're using: —
- They are used two different ways
  - As emphatic parentheses:
    → The party is going to be—wait for it—*legendary!*
  - Clarification when using commas in a parenthetical phrase:
    → The produce we bought—apples, pears, nectarines—quickly spoiled overnight.

Activity 2: Put It All Together

Combine signal phrases, a publication date, page numbers, and punctuation to build sentences that identify the authors, the quotation, and give a parenthetical citation in both MLA and APA styles.

References

Connors, R.J. & Lunsford, A. A. (1988, December). Frequency of formal errors in current college writing, or Ma and Pa Kettle do research. *College Composition and Communication, 39*(4), 395-409. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/357695

West, C. (n.d.) [Quotations.] Retrieved from http://www.cornelwest.com/.