

**FROM** <http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/lrw/grinker/LwtaEllipses.htm> (with minor editing to condense and highlight):

An ellipsis is a series of **three** points with **spaces between them** (. . .) inserted into a quotation to indicate the omission of material from the original quotation. There are quite a few simple rules for the proper use of ellipses . . . . Failure to use the proper form of an ellipsis could misrepresent the work of another person and result in legal liability for the writer. Correct use of ellipses, on the other hand, shows that the writer has carefully attended to detail, and thus increases the reader's confidence in the reliability of the written work.

1. When placing an ellipsis in the middle of a quotation to indicate the omission of material, use three points with spaces before and after the ellipsis.

**Incorrect:** The First Amendment provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting . . . the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

**Correct:** The First Amendment provides that "Congress shall make no law respecting . . . the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

2. When placing an ellipsis at the end of a quotation to indicate the omission of material, use **four** points -- a three-point ellipsis and a period. The ellipsis should follow a blank space.

**Incorrect:** The First Amendment provides that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech . . ."

**Correct:** The First Amendment provides that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech . . . ."

**NEVER BEGIN A SENTENCE WITH ELLIPSES.**

**NEVER BEGIN A SENTENCE WITH A LOWER-CASE LETTER.**

Never do: “. . . slavery in America had lingering effects.”

Never do: “. . . Slavery in America had lingering effects.”

Do: “[S]lavery in America had lingering effects.” (old form)

Do: “Slavery in America had lingering effects.” (new form)

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**IF A QUOTATION IS USED IN THE MIDDLE OF A SENTENCE,  
ITS FIRST WORD MUST BE MADE LOWER CASE  
(without need for brackets).**

Never do: The judges knew **that** “The courts had no choice but to void the statute.”

Do: The judges knew **that** “the courts had no choice but to void the statute.”

**A simple rule:**

**VERB + “that” = NO COMMA + LOWER CASE**

**VERB + comma = CAPITAL**

*e.g., The president warned **that** “war is inevitable.”  
(THE QUOTATION IS WORKED INTO YOUR SENTENCE.)*

*e.g., The president warned, “War is inevitable.”  
(THE SENTENCE IS BUILT AROUND THE QUOTATION.)*

**The not-so-simple rule for the same situation:**

**If the sentence and quotation are syntactically dependent = no comma and lower case.**

**If the sentence and quotation are not syntactically dependent = comma and capital.**

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**ELLIPSES ARE USED TO OMIT WORDS AND PUNCTUATION.**

Never do: “There is never enough time, . . . , to enjoy life.”

Do: “There is never enough time . . . to enjoy life.”

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**ELLIPSES ARE NOT USED  
WITH OBVIOUSLY INCOMPLETE QUOTATION SENTENCES.**

Never do: They struggled “. . . diligently and fairly successfully . . . .”

Do: They struggled “diligently and fairly successfully.”

**WHEN AN ELLIPSIS ENDS A SENTENCE,  
USE THE 3 ELLIPSIS DOTS AND A PERIOD.**

**ALL 4 DOTS MUST GO INSIDE THE QUOTATION MARKS.**

Do: Historians believe that “northerners faced an intriguing paradox . . . .”

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**BRACKETS (not parentheses) ARE USED  
TO MAKE CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO QUOTATIONS.**

Do: “The king believe[d] in absolute power.”

Do: “The protesters [were] determined.”

Do: “The experience of [American] slavery had deep effects.”

Do: She warned that, “not knowing the solution[, ] they were likely to take a misstep.”

Do: “[He] wanted absolute power.”

Do: “The general [Joseph Anderson] took control of the battle.”

Do: “The war [of 1812] was a period of trauma and triumph.”

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**USE [*sic*] TO INDICATE THAT A QUOTATION HAS AN ERROR IN IT.**

*sic* (italicized) = “thus,” “so”

Do: “Senator Fred [*sic*] Cruz was the heart of the opposition.”

Do: He asserted that “the rule is outrageous [*sic*].”

Do: She argues that “the Mexican war of 1847 [*sic*] was immoral.”

**USE BRACKETS [ ] TO ADD WORDS TO A QUOTATION  
OR TO MAKE A CORRECTION.**

**Do:** "The king [George III] took responsibility."

**Do:** Historians agree: "When the war began [in August 1914], none of the belligerents expected a long conflict."

**Do:** He believed that "the [inheritance] law was unfair to widows."

**Do:** She argues that "the Mexican war of [1846-1848] was immoral."

**BASIC TYPING RULES:**

**(1) SPACE BETWEEN ELLIPSIS DOTS.**

**Never do:** She announced that "the war ... was over."

**Do:** She announced that "the war . . . was over."

**(2) DO NOT SPLIT ELLIPSIS DOTS.  
ALL MUST BE ON THE SAME LINE.  
(They are one piece of punctuation.)**