MLA Brief Guide to Citing Poetry

In the running text of your paper or project

Titles of individual poems published as part of a collection should be placed in double quotation marks. For example poems found in *The Broadview Introduction to Literature*.

“The Wife’s Lament”

“To Rosemounde”

“Easter Wings”

Titles of collections of poems (i.e. *The Broadview Introduction to Literature*) and poems found online should be italicized.

*The Hunting of the Snark*  

*Moment*  

*That Time of Year (Sonnet 73)*

In-Text Citations

General Information

Provide the author and specific line numbers in the text, and include a complete reference on the Works Cited page.

Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation.

Question marks and exclamation points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text.

In-Text citations should appear as close to the quote as possible.

More Detailed Information

When you directly quote the works of others in your paper, you will format quotations differently depending on their length.

Short quotations- One line or less

If you quote part or all of a *single line* of verse, put it in quotation marks within your text, just as you would other quotes.

**Example:**

Is it possible that dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184)?
Short quotations - Two or three lines (no stanza break)

If you include two to three lines, use a forward slash with space on each side to indicate to your reader where the line breaks fall.

Example:

Cullen concludes, "Of all the things that happened there / That's all I remember" (11-12).

Short quotations - Two-three lines (with stanza break)

If a stanza break occurs during the quotation, use a double forward slash with space on each side to indicate to your reader where the stanza breaks fall.

Example:

The poet writes, “By a finger entwined in his hair. // Just the place for a Snark! I have said it twice” (5-6).

Long quotations – More than three lines

If you include quotes from poems that are more than three lines long, they are formatted very differently than shorter quotes. The quote needs to start on a new line, indented ½ inch from the left margin, omit quotation marks, and maintain double-spacing. The poem also needs to retain the original configuration of lines, spelling and punctuation.

Example 1:

In his poem "My Papa's Waltz," Theodore Roethke explores his childhood with his father:

    The whiskey on your breath
    Could make a small boy dizzy;
    But I hung on like death:
    Such waltzing was not easy.

    We Romped until the pans
    Slid from the kitchen shelf;
    My mother's countenance
    Could not unfrown itself. (1-8)
Example 2:

E.E. Cummings poem is an excellent example of freeform poetry:

```
the
   sky
   was
   can
dy
dlu
   minus
   edible
   spry
   pinks shy (1-8)
```

Adding words in quotations

If you add a word or words in a quotation, you should put brackets around the words to indicate that they are not part of the original text.

Example:

Jan Harold Brunvand, in an essay on urban legends, states, "some individuals [who retell urban legends] make a point of learning every rumor or tale" (78).

Omitting words in quotations

When omitting a few words from poetry quotations, use three-period ellipses.

Example:

In one of Shel Silverstein’s poem he writes, “Last night…some Whatifs crawled inside my ear” (1-2).

When omitting one or more full lines of poetry, space several periods to about the length of a complete line in the poem:

Example:

```
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:

.................
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration . . . (22-24, 28-30)
```
### Works Cited page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Reference List Example</th>
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</table>
These notes provide information about the contents and formatting of various components within a reference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Reference List Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Author/Editor names**   | • List the author names in the order they appear in the source.  
|                           | • Begin the first author’s name with the surname, followed by the initials of the first and middle name and any suffix, such as “Jr”.  
|                           | • If two authors, the second author’s name will be in normal order, following the first author, a comma, and “and”.  
|                           | • If three or more authors, provide the first author, a comma and “et al.”  
|                           | • Editor names are treated the same as author names, but followed by “, editor” or “, editors”.  
|                           | • When a corporate author is also the publisher, begin the entry with the title, and list the organization only as the publisher.  
|                           | • If a work has no author, begin the entry with the work’s title, rather than using “Anonymous” as the author.                                                                                  | Baron, Naomi S.                  |
|                           |                                                                                                                                            | Dorris, Michael, and Louise Erdrich. |
|                           |                                                                                                                                            | Burdick, Anne, et al.            |
|                           |                                                                                                                                            | Nunberg, Geoffrey, editor.       |
| **Titles**                | • The first word and all principal words are capitalized.  
|                           | • Use a colon and a space to separate a title from a subtitle, unless the title ends with a question mark or exclamation point.  
|                           | • Most titles are either italicized (for a work that is self-contained, like a book, journal, website, database, film, TV series, album, etc.) or placed in quotation marks (for a work that is contained in larger works, like a journal article, short story, poem, TV episode, song, etc.) | “The Reading Brain: Differences between Digital and Print.” |
| **Editions/Versions**     | • The number of an edition should be an Arabic ordinal.  
|                           | • Abbreviate the word “edition” as “ed.”  
|                           | • Unless following a period, descriptive terms are all lowercase.                                                                         | 7th ed., updated ed. unabridged version |
| **Volume and issue numbers** | • Volume and issue numbers should be Arabic numerals.  
|                           | • Some periodicals will use volume and issue numbers, while others will use only issue numbers.                                           | vol. 128, no. 1 no. 98           |
|                           |                                                                                                                                            | vol. 298, no. 2S1                |
| Publisher | Omit “business” words, like “Company” (“Co.”), “Corporation” (“Corp.”), “Incorporated” (“Inc.”), and “Limited” (“Ltd.”), from publisher names. | Liveright Publishing  
U of Chicago P  
Yale UP / Bibliographic Society of America |
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>For University Presses abbreviate “University” and “Press” as “U” and “P”, respectively.</td>
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<td>If multiple publishers are equally responsible for the work, list them in order, separated by a forward slash (“/”).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>If the parent company and a division of it are provided, use only the division; if the publisher name and an imprint of the publisher are provided, use only the publisher name.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Publication date | Use the full date as you find it in the source. | 1999  
28 Dec. 2014  
Jan.-Feb. 2015  
Spring 2008 |
| | If a book has no evident publication date, use the most recent copyright date present. | |
| | For a republished source, you may wish also to include the original publication date, which is placed immediately after the source’s title. | |
| Page ranges | A page number or range of numbers should respectively be preceded by “p.” or “pp.” | pp. 92-97.  
pp. 1+. |
| | If a work is not printed on consecutive pages, include only the first page number and a plus sign (“+”). | |
| Access dates | The online date of access is optional element, but is important when no publication date is available. | Accessed 23 July 2013. |
| | The access date would be placed after the URL or DOI. | |
| URLs/DOIs | In a URL, omit “http://” or “https://”. | www.cgd.csiro.au/.  
|  | When possible, cite a DOI (preceded by “doi:”), rather than a URL. | |