

## Ellipsis

**Definition:** A set of three spaced periods ( . . . ) that indicate one or more words have been omitted in a quotation or that there is a pause in written text.

**Sample:** *The examples below are based on the following paragraph.*

At Lincoln, making us into Americans did not mean scrubbing away what made us originally foreign. The teachers called us as our parents did, or as close as they could pronounce our names in Spanish or Japanese. No one was ever scolded or punished for speaking in his native tongue on the playground. Matti told the class about this mother's down quilt, which she had made in Italy with the fine feather of a thousand geese. Encarnación acted out how boys learned to fish in the Philippines. I astounded the third grade with the story of my travels on a stagecoach, which nobody else in the class had seen except in the museum at Sutter's Fort. After a visit to the Crocker Art Gallery and its collection of heroic paintings of the golden age of California, someone showed a silk scroll with a Chinese painting. Miss Hopley herself had a way of expressing wonder over these matters before a class, her eyes wide open until they popped slightly. It was easy for me to feel that becoming a proud American, as she said we should, did not mean feeling ashamed of being Mexican. (Ernesto Galarza, *Barrio Boy*)

**Usage:** Use ellipsis points to mark omissions from quoted material and to mark pauses in written passages.

**1) When you omit words from the middle of a sentence, use three spaced ellipsis points.**

**Example:**

In his autobiography, Galarza recalls, "It was easy for me to feel that becoming a proud American . . . did not mean feeling ashamed of being Mexican."

**2) When you omit words at the beginning of a sentence within a quoted passage, keep the previous sentence's end punctuation and follow it with the points of ellipsis.**

**Example:**

Galarza recalls that his teachers encourage students to share stories about their families and backgrounds: "I astounded the third grade with the story of my travels on a stagecoach, which nobody else in the class had seen except in the museum at Sutter's Fort. . . . [S]omeone showed a silk scroll with a Chinese painting."

**3) When you omit words at the end of a sentence within a quoted passage, use a period followed by ellipsis points.**

**Example:**

Miss Hopley herself had a way of expressing wonder over these matters before a class. . . . It was easy for me to feel that becoming a proud American, as she said we should, did not mean feeling ashamed of being Mexican.

- 4) **When you omit one or more complete sentences from a quoted passage, keep the previous sentence’s end punctuation and follow it with the points of ellipsis.**

**Example:**

About Lincoln School, Galarza writes, “At Lincoln, making us into Americans did not mean scrubbing away what made us originally foreign. . . . It was easy for me to feel that becoming a proud American, as [the principal] said we should, did not mean feeling ashamed of being Mexican.”

- 5) **To show that a full line or more of poetry has been omitted, use an entire line of spaced periods.**

**Example:**

I dream of Hanoi:  
Co-ngu Road  
ten years of separation  
the way back sliced by a frontier of hatred.  
I want to bury the past  
to burn the future  
still I yearn  
still I fear  
those endless nights  
waiting for dawn.

I dream of Hanoi:  
.....  
Ten years of separation  
.....  
still I yearn  
still I fear  
those endless nights  
waiting for dawn.

- 6) **Use three spaced ellipsis points to indicate a pause in written dialogue.**

**Example:**

“Well, . . . I don’t know what to say,” Sarah answered with a quiver to her voice.

**Additional Notes:**

- 1) When using ellipsis points, be sure to leave a space before, between, and after the points.
- 2) When you omit words from a quoted passage, be sure not to change the meaning.
- 3) For poetry, make sure that the line of spaced periods is as long as the previous line of poetry.
- 4) Use brackets to show any changes you have made to make the sentence fit grammatically in the new context or to clarify unclear pronouns. See examples two and four in the examples above.