

Writers' Workshop



ellipsis

—

(hyphen)

—

(en dash)

—

(em dash)



In this four part writer's workshop, you will learn to use the dash (en and em), ellipsis, hyphen, colon, and semi-colon.

Traditionally, the **ellipsis** (. . .) has represented that the writer has redacted (omitted) something from a quotation. It can also symbolize a pause/break in thought, a hesitation, or a "trailing off" in your sentence.

Example 1: "Patty, did you . . . uh, really binge watch all of Marvel's Spider-Man movies in one day?"

Note: In the example sentence, the writer uses the ellipsis mark to signify their hesitancy. Often times, writers will use an ellipsis in dialogue, to realistically express the way someone would speak, and/or to achieve a certain tone. There are times when you may pause when you are speaking to someone. To capture the realism of human speech in/with writing, an ellipsis can be used. (*Note:* The plural form of ellipsis is ellipses.)

Example 2: Hermione stated to Mr. Reed, "Don't hate the player . . . hate the game."

Note: In the second example sentence, an ellipsis was used to omit something. Let's examine why the writer may have selected to use an ellipsis.

Here is the original sentence: "Don't hate the player Mr. Reed, hate the game."

If the writer was to use a speech tag along with Hermione's direct quote, the reader would possibly encounter an unattractive level of repetition. To eliminate unwanted redundancy, the writer redacted Mr. Reed's name from the quote. Otherwise, the reader would come across the following sentence: "Hermione stated to Mr. Reed, "Don't hate the player Mr. Reed, hate the game." Truthfully, both sentences are grammatically correct. However, due to a speech tag, the reader is aware that Hermione is talking to Mr. Reed. If the writer chooses, the reiteration of Mr. Reed's name can be eliminated by the use of an ellipsis to create or achieve a specific tone in their work.

Example 3: "No matter how far you go down the wrong path on a road, you can always turn around and head in the right direction."

Word Problem: The writer would like to use the above quote in their personal narrative. But, they feel as though this sentence can be reduced to mimic the simplistic way that they would actually speak. How would you use the ellipsis mark to solve this problem?

Analysis: "No matter how far you go down the wrong path ^{on a road}, you can always turn around and head in the right direction."

Solution: “No matter how far you go down the wrong path . . . , you can always turn around and head in the right direction.”

Explanation: The writer felt as though saying “on a road” was not needed, and it did not sound like the way they would speak. By removing those three words (“on a road”) from the original quote and replacing them with an ellipsis, the writer shows the reader ethically, that they have taken some information out.

Last minute information about the ellipsis:

1. An ellipsis is represented by three dots (not two and not four or more).
2. The ellipsis should remain on one line. (Do not allow it to carry on to the next line.)
3. You may use an ellipsis mark after a complete sentence. (Remember the proper spacing.)
4. Ellipses can be used before and after terminal punctuation.
5. An ellipsis is not the same as the mathematical term “ellipse.”
6. Do not overuse an ellipsis mark; it’s annoying. It is acceptable to use an ellipsis to omit a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph from the passage being quoted.
7. An ellipsis is designed to save space and/or omit material that is less relevant. (They can be useful to get right to the point.)
8. An ellipsis may be used to begin a sentence. However, you must begin the sentence with open quotations, the ellipsis mark, followed by capitalizing the first letter of the beginning word, and placing brackets around it. (*Example:* “. . . {F}inally, Grady is able to slam dunk.”) **Note:** Some writers may omit the ellipsis mark in this example. A bracketed capital letter also symbolizes an omission.
9. An ellipsis can be used to represent suspense, hesitation/pause (a moment of consideration), fear, or thoughts trailing off in time.
10. Commas, dashes, and ellipses are all interchangeable ways to create a pause or break in a sentence.
11. Most commonly, you will use an ellipsis to show a pause in dialogue, a break in the action of a sentence, or a missing piece of information in a sentence or quotation. (*Example:* “I suppose so . . .” Orion said.