

Adding Lead-Ins Before A Quote

Most professors prefer that all quotes have a lead-in to smoothly integrate the quote into the paragraph. A “dropped quote” is a quote that lacks a lead-in, and such a quote can seem abruptly placed into a paragraph.

Here are examples of different types of lead-ins and how to punctuate them:

***Use no punctuation before the quote if the quote is just smoothly continuing the sentence.**

- The wolf is “a major predator that had been missing from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem decades until its restoration in 1995” (U.S. National Park Service).
- After the wolf had been killed off by the end of the 1940s, it was “missing from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem . . . until its restoration in 1995” (U.S. National Park Service).

*** Use a comma if a verb of expression like “said” is leading into the quote (exception: if the lead-in also includes a “that,” no comma is needed)**

- The U.S. National Park Service writes, “The wolf is a major predator that had been missing from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem decades until its restoration in 1995.”
- The U.S. National Park Service writes **that** “the wolf . . . had been missing from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem decades until its restoration in 1995.”

***Use a colon mark if a complete sentence introduces a quote**

- According to the U.S. National Park Service, there were then many years before wolves were reintroduced to the area: “The wolf is a major predator that had been missing from the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem decades until its restoration in 1995.”

Consider whether your lead-in should provide context (who wrote/said it and when, where, in what larger source such as what book, etc.) Or, consider if there is any information you should give before the quote so that the reader will completely understand the quote. For example, if the quote mentions a “she,” make sure the reader will know what person the “she” refers to.