1. Use present tense throughout. It’s a convention: we all pretend that the events in the 
book, etc., are ongoing in some abstract sphere. It’s not what Shane thought, it’s what 
Shane thinks.

2. Never end-stop your own sentence with a period and then immediately start a quote. 
Instead, introduce a quote with a sentence or phrase of your own, so that the quote and 
introduction—provided you quote only a phrase—forms one grammatical sentence. If it’s 
clear from context that you’re not quoting a complete sentence from the source, you 
don’t need to use the little dots, technically an ellipsis (pl. ellipses).

   Here’s an example:

   In “A Late Encounter with the Enemy” General Tennessee Flintrock Sash (aka 
   Major George Poker Sash) lives a life not only emotionally and spiritually barren, but 
   completely void of all human characteristics. His only interest is pretty girls. Perhaps 
rather than saying that the General “lives,” I should say that he “exists.” O’Connor gives 
us an idea of just how empty his “life” is: “He had forgotten the name and face of his 
wife and the names and faces of his children or even if he had a wife and children, and 
he had forgotten the names of places and the places themselves and what had happened 
at them” (142), and “The past and the future were the same thing to him, one forgotten 
and the other not remembered; he had no more notion of dying than a cat” (139).

   O’Connor tells us that the General’s granddaughter, Sally Poker Sash, “prayed 
every night on her knees that he would live until her graduation from college” (134). But 
she isn’t motivated by a love for her grandfather, but rather by a love for what she 
thinks he stands for: the old values of the South. O’Connor tells us, “She wanted the 
General at her graduation because she wanted to show what she stood for, or, as she 
said, ‘what all was behind her,’ and was not behind them. This them was not anybody in 
particular. It was just all the upstarts who had turned the world on its head and 
unsettled the ways of decent living” (135).

3. If a quote has 50 words or more—yes, you’ll have to stop and count, but if it looks 
close, just do it—you’ll need to indent 5 spaces from the left margin, keeping the right 
margin the same. I don’t care whether you single- or double-space; single-spacing saves 
trees, double-spacing goes by the book. (That is, that’s the way we send in a manuscript 
for an article, following MLA guidelines.) If you’re on a borrowed computer/word 
processor and don’t know how to change the spacing of the program you’re using, just 
move the left margin in and keep going. Don’t forget to move it back out when you’re 
back to your own text, though.

4. Titles of books are underscored or italicized, if your setup has the capability: Shane or 
Shane; The Shining or The Shining. Short story titles, on the other hand, are placed in 
quotes: The short story “Kill the Man for Me” appears in the anthology Eye of a Woman.

5. Periods and commas go inside the closing quotation mark for a title or quote; you drop 
all punctuation from the original and use only what you need for your own sentence to 
end properly: One of the stories I had you read was “Death and Diamonds.” (Question 
marks and colons go outside the closing quotation mark, but with a little ingenuity, you 
can avoid sentences that use such things and forget this half of the rule.)