

## Ellipses: Dot to Dot

Ellipses are a punctuation mark that some people love, and some people never use. The most common is the three dot ellipses, although there are certain situations you will use the four dot ellipses.

Three dot ellipses are used in three situations:

1. In direct quotes to show that a word or several words have been omitted:  
The full sentence: "The artist liked oils and watercolors, but loved charcoal sketches most."  
The artist . . . loved charcoal sketches most.  
Even though oils and watercolors were nice, Jane . . . loved charcoal sketches most.
2. To indicate that words are omitted at the end of a sentence:  
The full sentence: "Will someone please tell me why our funding has been cut off?"  
Will someone please tell me why . . . ?
3. To show a sentence trailing off:  
I could help her, but . . .

Four dot ellipses are used:

1. When there are one or more sentences omitted between other sentences or one or more paragraphs omitted between other paragraphs. The first dot is a true period:  
The full passage: "Beefhide spirals in four different stick styles. Non-stain rawhides are available in 4 delicious flavors: Natural white sticks are cured to retain natural hearty taste. Value pack rawhide chew sticks are an economical, air-dried choice! Thick chip rolls are formed from rawhide chips."  
Beefhide spirals in four different stick styles. . . . Thick chip rolls are formed from rawhide chips.

Punctuation with ellipses:

1. There should be a space before and after each period . . .
2. Except with the four dot method, all other punctuation should be omitted around the ellipses (comma, semicolon, colon, em dash) unless you need it to clarify the sentence.

One more rule for ellipses: If a long quotation starts with a complete sentence and ends with a complete sentence, you don't need to use a three dot ellipses at the beginning or end of the extracted material unless you need to show that the quotation came from a larger body of writing.