Using the Ellipsis

What are ellipses?
Ellipses consist of three periods with a space before each period and after the last one: [ … ]. They are used to indicate that material has been omitted from an exact quote. Ellipses can also indicate a pause or hesitation in thinking in creative writing.

Format ellipses by...

⇒ Using the ellipsis to indicate omitted material
However, do not use an ellipsis if the omitted material comes at the beginning of the quote.

⇒ Placing a period behind the ellipsis if an entire sentence has been removed
Complete sentences must precede and follow the ellipsis.

⇒ Ending a quote with an ellipsis only if part of the final sentence of the quote is omitted.

⇒ Using the ellipsis to indicate the omission of a line of poetry
As with prose, if the poetry quotation ends with an ellipses, include a fourth period. Then follow with the parenthetical citation.

⇒ Placing them in creative writing pieces to indicate a pause or hesitation in speech
Ellipses may also indicate an incomplete thought.

Ellipses look like...

• Investigative researcher Jim Marrs writes, “Various discrepancies in Oswald’s military records…support the idea that Oswald was given set intelligence training” (112).

• As Pfaff points out, “But the meaning of class is dangerous ground for an American …. There is an identifiable upper class in Britain with an aristocratic ethos and a hereditary base” (39).

• Roman Polanski recalls, “Although I was never questioned about the tape, I should no doubt be accused of concealing a significant aspect of our lifestyle….” (298).

• T.S. Eliot puts Nancy Ellicott under a microscope to show the difference between performance and authenticity: “Miss Nancy Ellicott smoked/ And danced all the modern dances/ … / But [her aunts] knew that it was modern” (7-10).

• The wounded soldier’s final, whispered words were, “Tell Jenny I love…”