Ellipses ( . . . )

An ellipsis is a set of three periods that indicates the omission of words from quoted material, hesitation, or trailing off in dialogue or train of thought. An ellipsis should have spaces before, between, and after the periods.

Rule #1:

With quoted material, use an ellipsis to indicate an omission at the beginning, within, or at the end of a sentence. When the omission is at the end of a sentence, however, you must first insert the appropriate punctuation to end the sentence (a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark) and then add the ellipsis.

Examples of Rule #1:

Brandon remarked, " . . . and I will not arrive until 5:15 p.m."
Michael reminded us, "The school day at all schools . . . begins at 8:30 a.m."
Jennifer explained, "Due to unforeseen circumstances, I was unable to arrive on time. . ."

Rule #2:

With quoted material, use an ellipsis to indicate that a whole sentence or more or a whole paragraph or more has been omitted between sentences. Remember that you must first use appropriate punctuation (a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark) to end the sentence that precedes the ellipsis.

Examples of Rule #2:

The instructor stated, "First, make certain you take notes at all the workshops. Transcribe your notes while the material is still fresh in your mind . . . Finally, always date your notes."
Kimha asked, "Will we leave at daybreak? . . . What type of gear should I take?"

Rule #3:

Use an ellipsis in fictional writing to indicate hesitation or trailing off in dialogue or train of thought. If the sentence is considered incomplete, use only the ellipsis. If the sentence is considered complete, use a period and the ellipsis.

Examples of Rule #3:

The dark, clammy evening foretold stormy weather, unless . . . could it be? . . .
Rachel was not sure she wanted to go . . .
OR
Rachel was not sure she wanted to go. . .