

# Working with texts

## Always write about a text, a movie, a play ... in the present

| <input type="checkbox"/> Correct                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Wrong                            |
|---|---|
| "The author <b>writes</b> " ...                       | "The author <del>wrote</del> ..."                         |
| "Joe <b>speaks</b> very quietly in this scene."       | "Joe <del>spoke</del> very quietly in this scene."        |
| "The two characters <b>argue</b> with each other ..." | "The two charaters <del>argued</del> with each other ..." |
| "The writer <b>questions</b> if ..."                  | "The writer <del>questioned</del> if ..."                 |

This is called the **literary present** — check out [some more details about it](#).

## Always give line references to support your argument

### Example text

#### The real lessons from 9/11

*America risks swinging from hubris to muddle*

Sep 11<sup>th</sup> 2021 — Twenty years ago America set out to reshape the world order after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Today it is easy to conclude that its foreign policy has been abandoned on a runway at Kabul airport<sup>1</sup>. President Joe Biden says  
5 the exit from Afghanistan was about "ending an era" of distant wars, but it has left America's allies very worried and its enemies gleeful<sup>2</sup>. Most Americans are tired of it all: roughly two-thirds say the war wasn't worth it. Yet the national mood of fatigue and apathy is a poor guide to America's future role in the world. Its capabilities remain very strong and its strategy can be adapted for the 21<sup>st</sup> century — if the right lessons are drawn from the post-9/11 era.

Source: "[The real lessons from 9/11](#)", The Economist, 11.09.2021

### Reference in your own text

| ☐ <b>Correct</b>  | ☐ <b>OK, but not ideal</b>  | ☐ <b>Wrong</b>   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>The author writes that many US citizens are in a “mood of fatigue and apathy” (l. 7).</p> <p>► Best option because the <b>line reference is clear</b> and still as <b>unobtrusive [unaufdringlich]</b> as possible. The <b>literal quote</b> [wörtliches Zitat] at the end is marked by <b>quotation marks</b> [Anführungszeichen]</p> | <p>The author writes <b>in line 7</b> that many US citizens are in a “mood of fatigue and apathy”.</p> <p>► Not ideal because the line reference has too much weight by making it part of the sentence structure, the literal quote does have quotation marks – so this option is not wrong but also not as good as the first one</p> | <p>The author writes that many US citizens are in a mood of fatigue and apathy.</p> <p>► Wrong because (a) there is <b>no line reference</b> at all and (b) the last couple of words are a <b>literal quote</b> that is <b>not marked by quotation marks</b></p> |

## How to write line references

There are some abbreviations [Abkürzungen] for writing line references that you should know:

| What you write    | What it means                                | Further explanation  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <b>I. 7</b>       | line 7                                       | refers to [bezieht sich auf] just that one line  |
| <b>I. 7 f</b>     | line 7 and exactly <b>one following line</b> | refers to lines 7 and 8  |
| <b>I. 7 ff</b>    | line 7 and the following lines               | refers to lines 7 and <i>some</i> lines after it   |
| <b>II. 7 - 10</b> | lines 7 to 10                                | refers to exactly those four lines, the double “I” is for the plural “lines”, it’s usually not used with the “ff” abbreviation |