

Quotation Marks

WHAT ARE QUOTATION MARKS?

Quotation marks, double (“”) or single (’), are generally used for direct quotes, certain titles, and words used in a special manner.

Quotation marks are ALWAYS used in pairs, one at the beginning of the quoted text and one at the end. The same rule applies to titles and words used in a special sense or for emphasis.

Direct Quotes

Use double quotation marks (“”) around a direct quote. A direct quote is a word-for-word report of what someone else said or wrote. You use the exact words and punctuation of the original.

Harriet Jacobs writes, “She sat down, quivering in every limb” (61).

This example is a direct quotation from Jacobs’ book *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Therefore, it must have double quotation marks.

- ◆ Note: When using an indirect quote (stating what someone else has said or written but NOT in the exact words), do NOT use quotation marks.

Harriet Jacobs described the woman as she sat and trembled all over.

Here, this sentence describes what Jacobs wrote, though not in the exact words. Therefore, no quotation marks are needed.

⇒ For more information on indirectly quoting a text, please refer to the skills page on [Paraphrasing and Summarizing](#).

Quotations within Quotations

When researching, you may find many instances of a quotation within a quotation (that is, the author you are quoting has quoted another author) in scholarly essays. In this case, you use the single quotation marks (’) for the quote within the quote.

According to G.R. Wilson, “Later, making a report of his work he and his associates were doing, he said: ‘I have here presumed to give an account of 1,000 workers.’”

At the end of the sentence, both the single and double quotation marks appear. This is to show the end of the inner quotation (with the single marks) and also the end of the overall quotation (with the double marks).

Punctuation

- When quoting, it is important to remember that periods and commas are placed *within* the quotation mark.

“Basic skills learned in elementary school are vital.”

“Basic skills learned in elementary school are vital,” researchers argued.

- However, colons and semicolons go *outside* of the quotation marks.

In elementary school, we learn “basic skills”: reading, writing, and math.

Here, the words “basic skills” are being emphasized and go in the double quotation marks. Since the mark is a colon, it is placed *outside* the quotation marks.

- Other forms of punctuation such as dashes (—), question marks (?), and exclamation points (!) go *inside* the quotation marks *ONLY* if they are part of the quote. *Do not* use any other punctuation within the quote after that mark.

Incorrect: “Leave now!,” Jessica yelled.

(You do not need two forms of punctuation within the quotation marks.)

Correct: “Leave now!” Jessica yelled.

- If the dash, question mark, or exclamation point is not part of the quote, place it on the *outside* of the quotation marks.

I cannot believe that woman called me an “idiot”!

Who wrote “Wuthering Heights”?

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of works that are published within other works, such as chapter titles of books, articles in periodicals, and essays within other works. All punctuation must be enclosed within the quotation marks. Single quotation marks are used for a quotation within the quoted title.

A song:

“America the Beautiful”

An essay:

“Dismantling ‘The Master’s House’”

A short poem:

“Annabel Lee”

An article in a periodical:

“War on the Home Front”

A short story:

“The Gilded Six-Bits”

An episode of a TV/radio show:

“Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl”

An page on a website:

“Travel Warnings”

A Subdivision of a book:

“The Mystery” (Chapter 27 of Clotel)

- ◆ Note: Quotation marks are NOT required for the title of your own paper (unless you use a quote within your title) or for common nicknames:

Appearance Versus Reality in “The Gilded Six-Bits”

Here, “The Gilded Six-Bits” is in quotation marks because it is the title of a short story. However, the rest of the title of the paper is not in quotation marks.

Former President, Bill Clinton, was rarely referred to by his full name, William.

Here, the nickname is common and widely known; therefore, no quotation marks are needed.

⇒ For specific information on using quotations in MLA or APA formatting, please refer to the skills pages on MLA and APA format. These pages can be found under Research and Documentation.

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