

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are used to represent exact written or spoken language from another individual. Quotation marks also set off the titles of poems, short stories, and articles. Certain words or phrases can also be given special meaning with the use of quotation marks.

Direct Quotations

Direct quotations involve taking someone else's exact words or statements and incorporating the quote into your writing.

- If the quoted material is a complete sentence, you must capitalize the first letter of the sentence.
Example: My sister said, "I need to do my homework."
- If the quoted material is a fragment or a phrase, do not capitalize the first letter.
Example: The phrase "don't win in practice" is consistent for all sports.
- If the initial quote is vague or unclear, you can add words with the use of brackets to clarify the meaning.
Example: "John thinks that this brother [Jeff] will be a great dad," said Andrew.
- Use single quotation marks if you are quoting material that has a quote within it.
Example: I said, "My father used to tell me, 'Always give it your all.'"

Quotation Marks for Special Circumstances

- Use quotation marks if the word or words are meant to imply irony or sarcasm.
Example: The mayor told the people of his town that he "cares" about their well-being.
- Use quotation marks to highlight certain words within a sentence.
Example: I wrote "your" when I meant to write "you're."

Quotation Marks for Titles

Use quotation marks to denote the titles of

- songs,
- essays,
- poems,
- short stories,
- one-act plays,
- chapters within books,
- episodes of television shows,
- articles in newspapers, magazines, or journals.

Punctuation with Quotation Marks

American English differs from British English in one important way: In American English, periods and commas go within closing quotation marks, regardless if the quotation marks are single or double.

American English: I said, "I don't like rain."

British English: I said, "I don't like rain".

Before opening quotation marks, use a comma to shift between the main discourse and the quoted material. If the quotation comes before the main discourse, place the comma inside the closing quotation marks.

Tom said, "I enjoy playing football."

"I enjoy playing football," said Tom.

Commas and periods go inside quotation marks unless a parenthetical citation follows.

Lauren said, "The beach is hot and humid."

Lauren said, "The beach is hot and humid" (16).

Question marks and exclamation points go inside closing quotation marks in certain contexts. If the punctuation is part of the quoted material, the punctuation goes inside. Otherwise, it belongs outside the quotation marks.

Have you heard the song "Don't Stop Believing"?

"Stop!" shouted the police officer.

Activity

In the following sentences, put quotation marks where they are necessary.

1. Jimmy said, I have to clean my room later.
2. When will you read Edgar Allan Poe's short story The Tell-Tale Heart?
3. According to Anderson Davis, Boys are more likely to be aggressive than girls (2).
4. My uncle said Pain is weakness leaving the body, Greg said.
5. Clean your room, said my mom.
6. The word being is often used incorrectly.
7. Cynthia asked, Have you seen the new Sherlock Holmes movie?
8. While running down the street, the criminal shouted, Get in the van!

Answer Key for Activity

1. Jimmy said, "I have to clean my room later."
2. When will you read Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart"?
3. According to Anderson Davis, "Boys are more likely to be aggressive than girls" (2).
4. "My uncle said 'Pain is weakness leaving the body,'" Greg said.
5. "Clean your room," said my mom.
6. The word "being" is often used incorrectly.
7. Cynthia asked, "Have you seen the new Sherlock Holmes movie?"
8. While running down the street, the criminal shouted, "Get in the van!"