

UMD ARC/Writing & Reading Center**Using Quotation Marks**

Quotation marks are primarily used to indicate that certain words, phrases or sentences were taken directly from someone else, word-for-word. We all know we have to use quotation marks when we take direct statements from a book, article, person, or any other place where words are used. What gets confusing, however, is where we put the quotes, and how we use other punctuation with quotation marks. Where do the commas go? What about the period, or question mark? Where do we start the quote? Where do we end it? What about when we quote whole paragraphs, or lines from poetry? These are the places where most errors occur, so we're going to sit down and take them one at a time.

Where do we put quotes?

1. We put double quotation marks ("...") before the very first word we are quoting and after the very last word we are quoting, whether we are quoting a word, phrase, sentence, or more.

- President John F. Kennedy is known for saying, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."
- "I cannot tell a lie," said George Washington.

DO NOT use quotation marks around indirect or summarized quotations.

- According to President Kennedy, Americans should not ask what their country can do for them, but should ask what they can do for their country.

2. We use quotation marks when we are writing dialogue and we want to signal a change in speakers.

- "Girl number twenty," said Mr. Gradgrind, squarely pointing with his square forefinger. "I don't know that girl. Who is that girl?"
- "Sissy Jupe, sir," explained number twenty, blushing, standing up, and curtsying.
- "Sissy is not a name," said Mr. Gradgrind. "Don't call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia."
- (Charles Dickens, from *Hard Times*)

NOTE: When a person is speaking for two or more paragraphs, we open each paragraph with quotation marks, but we do not use closing quotation marks until the end of the speech.

3. We use quotation marks when we are stating the title of a newspaper or magazine article, essays, book chapters, short stories, poems, songs, and episodes of radio and television programs.

- My favorite Christmas song is "Jingle Bell Rock."
- Nathaniel Hawthorne's story "Young Goodman Brown" is about what happens to a man who is not as good as he thinks.

DO NOT use quotation marks around the titles of movies, books, plays, records or CD's, television or radio shows, paintings, sculptures, cartoons, pamphlets, long poems, or the names of magazines and newspapers.

How do we use punctuation marks with quotation marks?

1. When using *periods* and *commas*, we put them inside the quotation marks, even when the quotation is not a full sentence.

- "Writing is a very painful process," says essayist and novelist Tom Wolfe. "I never understand writers who say it is enjoyable."
- The Supreme Court ruled that school integration should proceed "with all deliberate speed."

NOTE: When quoting someone/something and citing it with MLA*** documentation, place the period after the quotation marks and parenthetical documentation.

- Flannery O'Connor's "Greenleaf" is a story dramatizing "the divine harmony that embraces nature, man, and God" (Asals 330).
-

2. When using *colons* and *semicolons*, we put them outside the quotation marks.

- Murphy's Law should be called "Murphy's Threat": If something can go wrong, it will.
- Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage"; if he were a member of today's music video generation, he'd write, "All the world's a sound stage."

3. When using *question marks* and *exclamation points*, we put them inside quotation marks if they are part of the quote. Otherwise, we put them outside.

- Mark Twain wrote an essay titled "Was Shakespeare Famous?"
- What famous writer said, "Where there is no imagination there is no horror"?

NOTE: When quoting someone/something and citing it with MLA documentation, use the preceding guidelines to determine where the question mark and exclamation mark go, and then use the parenthetical documentation and a period.

- Mr. Lengel, the antagonist of John Updike's short story "A & P," gives the hero one last chance when he asks, "Did you say something, Sammy?" (133).

4. If you *interrupt the quotation with a signal statement in the middle of a sentence*, set off the statement with a comma.

- "I have to go to the bank," said Shelley, "and then the grocery store."

5. If you *interrupt a quotation at the end of a complete sentence*, use a comma before the signal statement and a period following. Then resume the quotation.

- "I was so excited as I walked into the stadium," Jay said. "My favorite band was playing and I had front row tickets."

When do we use single quotation marks?

1. We use single quotation marks if we want to put a quote inside another quote.

- As Chris walked out of his calculus class, he muttered, "Someone should put a sign outside this room that quotes Dante: 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.'"
- Lisa told me, "I was walking to Bio. when Jeff came up to me and said, 'How was your weekend?' He's so cute!"

NOTE: If you must quote a passage that is inside another passage that you are already quoting, alternate quotation marks: double, single, double. Make sure you have a closing quotation mark for every open quotation mark.

- Kerry continued, "Then Sarah whispered, 'Don't forget the old saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.'"

How do we quote long passages of prose?

1. MLA FORMAT

When quoting prose, use the following guidelines:

Length: If you are quoting prose that is longer than 4 typed lines, set them off in an indented block, separate from your own words.

Introduction and punctuation: Introduce the quotation in your own words.

Indentation: Indent 1 inch or 10 spaces from the left margin.

Quotation marks and spacing: Do not enclose indented quotation with quotation marks. The block format signals word-for-word quotation. Double space the quotation.

Paragraphing: If you quote part of a paragraph or only one paragraph, do not indent the first line more than 1 inch or 10 spaces. To quote two or more paragraphs in block format, indent the first line of each paragraph an additional $\frac{1}{4}$ or 3 spaces (for a total of 13 spaces from the left margin). After a block quotation, begin a new paragraph of your own writing only if you change subjects.

Documentation: One space after the punctuation mark that ends the quotation, cite the source parenthetically.

Omissions: If you omit words from a quotation, signal the omission with ellipsis points.

- The portrait of Thomas Gradgrind that Charles Dickens presents in *Hard Times* satirizes defects in the nineteenth-century philosophy of Unitarianism:

Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing anything over.... With a ruler and a pair of scales, and multiplication tables always in his pocket, sir, ready to weight and measure any parcel of human nature, and to tell you exactly what it comes to (2).

2. APA FORMAT

When quoting prose, use the following guidelines:

Paragraphs: Indent the first word ½ inch, or 5 spaces from the left margin.

Length: If you are quoting prose that is longer than 40 words, set them off in an indented block, separate from your own words.

Paragraphing: If an indented quotation runs longer than one paragraph, indent the first line of successive paragraphs an additional ½ or 5 spaces (for a total of 1 inch or 10 spaces). Do not use quotation marks unless they appear in the original.

How do we quote long passages of poetry?

1. When quoting *more than 3 lines of poetry*, use the following guidelines:

Indentation: Indent 1 inch or 10 spaces from the left margin. If the poem looks unbalanced on the page, indent it more or less as necessary.

Spacing and Formatting: Double space the quotation and arrange the passage to look as much like the original as possible. If a quotation begins in the middle of a line, match the alignment in the original and do not shift the line to the left or right.

Line Length: If a long line of poetry would extend beyond the right margin, continue it on the next line, indenting it an extra ¼ inch or 3 spaces (for a total of 13 spaces from the left margin).

Quotation marks: Use quotation marks only if they appear in the original.

Line numbers: Include line numbers in parentheses one space after the last line.

Omissions: If you omit words from a quotation, signal the omission with ellipsis points.

- Williams Blake's "The Tiger" questions the origins of that part of creation which is not innocent but not necessarily evil, either.

Tiger Tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry? (1-4)

NOTE: If you are quoting only two or three lines of poetry, incorporate them in your text, using a slash (/) to indicate the start of a new line.

- Boasting his poetic powers, Shakespeare opens one of his most famous sonnets with "Not marble, nor thy gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme."

How do we quote lines of dialogue in fiction?

When quoting dialogue between two or more speakers, use the indented format for prose and follow the paragraphing of the original, even if you quote fewer than 4 typed lines. One space after the quotation, cite the source parenthetically.

How do we quote lines of dialogue in drama and films?

If you quote dialogue between two or more speakers, use the indented quotation format. Indent 1 inch or 10 spaces from the left margin. Introduce each speaker by his or her name in all capital letters followed by a period: OTHELLO. Use quotation marks only if they appear in the original. Indent subsequent lines in a character's speech an additional ¼ inch or 3 spaces (for a total of 13 spaces from the left margin). When a new character speaks, start a new line 1 inch or 10 spaces from the left margin. Double space the quoted lines. One space after the punctuation mark ending the quotation, cite the source parenthetically.

As Iago incites him, Othello plots Desdemona's murder:

OTHELLO. Get me some poison, Iago, this night. I'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again. This night, Iago!

IAGO. Do it not with poison. Strangle her in bed, even the bed she hath contaminated.

(4.1.200-04)

Although trying to remember all the rules of where to put quotation marks, how to use other punctuation marks, and how to use quotation marks can appear intimidating and frightening, it's only a matter of reference. If you can't memorize all these rules, just make sure you always have a copy of them nearby. Good luck, and have fun quoting!

**** For additional help on MLA and/or APA citation, please see the corresponding handouts.

References

*Information taken from *The Ready Reference Handbook* by Jack Dodds.

*Compiled by: Rebecca Errington
UMD Writing and Reading Center Tutor, 2003*