

Quotation marks

How quotation marks are used

' ' " "

Quotation marks are used for a variety of reasons. They are used to enclose a direct quotation or to identify a specialist term. They are also used to indicate the title of a paper in a bibliography. Quotation marks are particularly important when referencing because they indicate when someone else's words are being used. The misplaced use of quotation marks can also change meaning unintentionally and create ambiguity.

This pamphlet will provide examples of how quotation marks are used in different situations and a short quiz for you to test out your knowledge of quotation marks.

Variations in use

Quotation marks can be single (' ') or double (" "). In Australia, there is a preference for single quotation marks. You should check which type the style guide in your faculty recommends.

The placement of quotation marks in relation to punctuation such as full-stops, exclamation points and question marks also varies. North America and Britain follow different conventions and the practice in Australia can depend on the publication and the style guide it uses. Australia most commonly follows the British practice. It is recommended that you use single quotation marks unless your faculty style guide states otherwise.

Long quotations

When using a quotation that is longer than about thirty words, indent the quotation and remove the quotation marks. The font in such a quotation is usually smaller than the surrounding text (for example, size 11 instead of 12). The following is an example of a block quotation. Quotation marks are not used.

Quotation marks are also called quote marks, quotes or speech marks; they used to be called inverted commas but that term appears to be falling out of favour. Their primary function is to show direct speech and the quoted work of other writers. Other uses are for enclosing the title of a song or an article in a periodical, and for drawing attention to a term that is unusual or recently coined (Commonwealth of Australia: 2002).



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1. Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotations:

✓ 'My house!' he cried out, 'My house is burning!'

However, don't use quotation marks with indirect quotes:

✗ She said that she remembered how 'he cried for his house'.

✓ She said that she remembered how he cried for his house.

2. Use double quotation marks (or single marks if you normally use double marks) **to enclose a quote within a quote:**

✓ 'I remember', she said, 'how he cried "My house!"'

3. Use commas with direct quotes:

✓ In her article, Bektovic (2005, p. 3) maintains, 'The decision not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol will harm the Australian economy'.

However, do not use commas:

- for integrated quotes
- for quotes introduced by 'that'.

✗ Bektovic (2005, p. 3) believes that, 'the decision [...] will harm the Australian economy'.

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✗ Brown (1997, p. 84) describes the results as, 'unreliable and insignificant'.

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4. Use full-stops carefully with quotation marks:

✓ Evans defines referencing as 'the labelling of material you have drawn from other writers with enough information for the reader to be able to locate the source' (1995, p. 52).

✓ Sources are detailed in a reference list ordered according to 'order of appearance'.

✓ The lecturer said, 'The purpose of this paper is to present your argument'.

✓ 'The purpose of this paper is to present your argument.'

Note: Observe where the comma and full-stop are placed in different sentences.

- If the quotation is not a full sentence (example two), there is no comma placed before the quotation mark.
- The full stop is placed before the closing quotation mark if the quotation is a full, self-contained sentence without any 'he said' or other carrier expression (example four).

5. Keep the punctuation as part of the quotation if it was originally part of the quotation:

- 'Are you going to hand in your assignment tomorrow?' the lecturer asked.
- 'Are you going to hand in your assignment tomorrow?' the lecturer asked.

6. If the punctuation mark is not part of the original quotation, place it outside the quotation mark:

- Did you hear the professor say 'Hooray for the holidays'?

7. Use quotation marks to refer to the title of articles, poems, stories, songs or book chapters (not whole works):

- Chapter 5, 'Poetry and Revolution', deals extensively with Charlotte Smith's poem 'The Emigrants'.

However, use italics for the title of a whole book.

8. Use quotation marks to indicate that a word or phrase is used in a special way or that the word is the topic under discussion:

- The term 'proxemics' was coined by anthropologist Edward T. Hall in 1963.
- Four soldiers were killed by 'friendly fire'.

However, don't use quotation marks after the expressions *known as*, *called* or *so called*:

- The study of spatial distances between individuals in different cultures and situations is known as 'proxemics'.

9. Use quotation marks the first time a technical term is used in a document for a general audience:

- The medical treatment of 'androgen insensitivity syndrome' is controversial.

10. Use quotation marks to highlight a questionable concept:

- The government did not implement the 'policy' as they promised.

11. Use quotation marks for colloquial words in academic writing:

- The Australian student said she was a 'fair dinkum Aussie'.

A short quiz

Add the quotation marks and any other punctuation that is needed in the following questions. Attempt to answer these questions before checking the answers at the bottom of this page.

1. Do you know Dorothy Porter's poem The Ninth Hour she asked.
2. Of all the poems in her latest book she said this is the best. It's very dramatic she added
3. Lee's lecturer asked him why he hadn't handed in his assignment.
4. Who said To be or not to be, that is the question asked Dr Meehan.
5. In his article Punctuation Tips Smith discusses the importance of commas
6. Turning towards his student, he said Don't leave yet He was frowning and clearly disapproved of something

Why haven't you referenced that book he asked

I forgot where I got the quote she answered

References

Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, shoots & leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation*. London: Profile Books.

Commonwealth of Australia. (2002). *Style manual* (6th ed). Australia: John Wiley and Sons.

McKenzie, M. (2001). *Handbook for Writers and Editors*. Melbourne: Dundas Press.

Resources

These websites provide information and exercises on the use of punctuation marks:

Capital Community College:

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/marks.htm>

Online Writing Lab at OWL at Purdue University

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html#punctuation>

The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation

http://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/cnt_punc.asp

Answers

1. 'Do you know Dorothy Porter's poem "The Ninth Hour"?' she asked.
 2. 'Of all the poems in her latest book,' she said, 'this is the best. It's very dramatic,' she added.
 3. This is an indirect quotation and no quotation marks are necessary.
 4. 'Who said, "To be or not to be, that is the question"?' asked Dr Meehan.
 5. In his article 'Punctuation Tips', Smith discusses the importance of commas.
 6. Turning towards his student, he said, 'Don't leave yet'. He was frowning and clearly disapproved of something.
- 'Why haven't you referenced that book?' he asked.
- 'I forgot where I got the quote,' she answered.