

TIP Sheet

QUOTATION MARKS

Quotation marks are used primarily to enclose or set off exact words. They are used to indicate a person's exact written or spoken words, and in certain situations they are also used to set off words, phrases, or specific types of titles. When using quotation marks, certain rules apply regarding punctuation and capitalization.

1. Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotations.

- The direct quotation of a person's exact words, whether spoken or written, must be in quotation marks.

"Don't forget to visit me in London," Martha said.

- Do not use quotation marks around indirect quotations. An indirect quotation does not state the speaker's exact words.

Martha said that I should visit her when I am in London.

2. Use quotation marks to indicate words used ironically, with reservations, or in some unusual way.

Declaring it was a symbol of "progress," they cut down all the trees.

3. Use quotation marks to set off words used as words.

- Words used as words are usually set off by the use of italics or underlined to indicate italics. However, enclosing them in quotation marks is also acceptable.

The words "accept" and "except" are frequently confused.

4. Use quotation marks around the titles of newspaper and magazine articles, poems, essays, short stories, songs, episodes of television and radio programs, and chapters or subdivisions of books.

After I read "The Internet's Role in Education" in one of my educational journals, I had a much better understanding of the issues.

The class analyzed Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" and eventually agreed that there could be several interpretations.

5. When using quotation marks, certain rules apply regarding capitalization and punctuation.

- Use a capital letter with the first word of a complete sentence of a direct quotation.

The teacher remarked, "The semester is already half over."

- Do not use a capital letter with the first word of a direct quotation that is only part of a sentence.

Tyler asked if I would be "heading out of town on a Harley."

- If the quotation of a complete sentence is interrupted in the middle and then continues after the interruption, do not capitalize the second part of the quotation. Use commas to set off the explanatory words.

"When it comes to cake," Jessica said, "chocolate cake takes the cake."

- If the quotation continues with a new sentence after an explanatory interruption, use a period at the end of the interruption and continue the quotation with a capital letter where the new sentence begins.

"When it comes to cake, chocolate cake takes the cake," Jessica said. "In fact, I'd love to have some right now."

- If a quotation begins the sentence, set it off with a comma from the unquoted part of the sentence unless it ends with a question mark or exclamation point. Because the explanatory words simply continue the sentence, do not begin them with a capital letter.

"I don't know what happened," he said quickly.

"What happened?" she asked.

"We saw just what happened!" they shouted.

- Always place periods and commas inside the quotation marks.

He said, "I enjoy working on automobile engines."

Although Lawrence had asked for "the best seat in the house," he didn't seem to notice they were seated right next to the kitchen.

- Place colons and semicolons outside quotation marks.

Dave had replied, "I regret I am unable to attend the wedding"; he was there, however, for the entire ceremony.

- Place question marks and exclamation points inside quotation marks unless they apply to the sentence as a whole.

The clerk politely asked, "Would you like paper or plastic?"

What do you mean by "over the hill"?

- After a word group introducing a quotation, use a comma, a colon, or no punctuation at all, depending on the context.

Use a comma if the quotation is introduced or followed by an expression such as *he said* or *she remarked*.

She replied, "Take it quickly before I change my mind."

Use a colon if a quotation is introduced by a full independent clause.

He feels the advice of Alexander Pope is especially relevant: "To err is human, to forgive divine."

When a quotation is blended into the writer's introductory sentence, no punctuation is needed to separate the introduction from the quoted phrase.

Marisa comes here every day at noon and asks for "a dog and a beer."

- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.
The professor explained, "Although Thoreau wrote that most men 'lead lives of quiet desperation,' much of his writing expressed the joy in life."

6. Use indentation rather than quotation marks to set off long quotations of prose or poetry.

- To quote more than four typed lines of prose, use indentation rather than quotation marks. Set off the quoted prose by indenting ten spaces from the left margin of your text and double space the lines. Long quotations of prose are usually introduced by a sentence ending with a colon.

Thoreau exhibits this strength of will in "Civil Disobedience":

I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion.

Let us see who is the strongest. What force has a multitude?

They only can force me who obey a higher law than I. They

force me to become like themselves. I do not hear of men being

forced to live this way or that by masses of men. What sort of life

were that to live? When I meet a government which says to me,

"Your money or your life," why should I be in haste to give it my money?

- When quoting more than three lines of a poem, set the quoted lines off from the text by indenting ten spaces from the left margin.

William Blake's "The Tyger" begins with the lines:

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright

In the forests of the night,

What immortal hand or eye

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?