

## "WHEN & HOW TO USE QUOTATION MARKS"

**1. To isolate someone else's *exact* spoken or written words (Ex 1).** Quotations are **unnecessary**, however, if the quote is paraphrased (Ex 2).

*Ex 1:* "I'm not going to come up with anything smart," said Gillian.

*Ex 2:* Gillian didn't think what she would say would be smart.

When writing dialogue, each new paragraph means a new person has begun speaking. For example:

"I'm not going to come up with anything smart," said Gillian.

"You should have more faith in yourself," said John. "You're a very smart neuroscience major at Pitzer."

"Maybe, but sometimes I get insecure," said Gillian. "Sometimes I get lonely inside."

**NOTE:** When including a quotation from prose or poetry that **exceeds four typed lines of text**, place it ten indentations (a tab) from the left margin. **Quotation marks are unnecessary** because the indentation indicates that the text is a quotation. Indent the first lines of any paragraphs within the quote another three spaces to the left. Normally, quotations are introduced with a colon. For example:

Elana Zilberg asserts that the United States' crime-reduction strategy of deporting immigrants with criminal records has stimulated a huge increase in the crime rate of El Salvador that cannot be addressed easily:

The siphoning off of immigrant gang youth through incarceration followed by deportation has come to serve as a key management strategy for the North. The results in El Salvador have been disastrous, serving only to intensify levels of violence there-gang and state. To the extent that the US has responded at all to the needs of the Salvadoran state on the issue of deported gang youth and youth violence, it has been to reproduce its strategies of abatement, but with this important difference – deportation is not an option for the Salvadoran state (1).

**2. When any quotation contains another quotation, enclose the second quote with single quotation marks.**

*Ex:* "I sometimes tease Gillian by asking her, 'What happened to your hair today?'" said John. "She doesn't like it very much, but it's funny anyway."

**3. The titles of short works should have quotations around them.** Short works are: newspaper and magazine articles, poems, short stories, songs, episodes of television and radio programs, and chapters or subdivisions of books.

*Ex:* My favorite short story has always been, "Hills Like White Elephants," by Ernest Hemingway.

**4. Quotation marks can be used when any discussion is being made about a word and the word appears in the text.**

*Ex:* Students frequently do not understand the difference between "affect" and "effect."

**5. Don't use quotation marks to emphasize slang/particular expressions, or to make a word sound sarcastic. You can use italics sparingly for emphasis.**

**Incorrect:** If you ask me, that new look of hers is "dope."

**Revised:** If you ask me, that new look of hers is *dope*.

## 6. The use of punctuation with quotation marks follows particular conventions.

### a. Periods and commas

Put periods and commas inside quotation marks.

*Ex:* “Don’t make fun of me,” Gillian said. “I hate it when you make fun of my hair.”

However, the period always comes after the citation in traditional MLA format.

*Ex:* Addressing the question as to why the U.S. is preparing to send more troops to Iraq as the U.S. plans to transfer power to an interim Iraqi government, President Bush said, “My judgment is that the closer we come to the deadline, the more likely it is people will challenge our will. In other words, it provides a convenient excuse to attack” (2).

### b. Colons and semicolons

Put colons and semicolons outside quotation marks.

*Ex:* After the speaker finished, John said to me, “I was glad he addressed Nixon’s presidency”; on the contrary, I felt that the speaker’s rant was unnecessary.

### c. Question marks and exclamation points

Put question marks and exclamation points inside quotation marks only if they are part of the quotation.

*Ex:* When he enters the Center for Writing, John always asks, “What are you up to these days?” Have you ever heard the expression, “Life is a bowl of cherries”?

However, in MLA format, the question mark and exclamation points should appear within the quotation and the period should appear after the citation.

*Ex:* Ralph Thomas poses the important question, “What are the most pressing postmodern concerns of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?” (61).

### d. Introducing quoted material

Formal introductions (full independent clauses) need colons.

*Ex:* Taylor explains that she doesn’t like L.A. because of its poor environmental conditions: “Even though the surrounding geography may be beautiful, I still can’t breathe the air or drink the water.”

Expressions such as “he said” introducing or following quotations need commas.

*Ex:* George said, “I didn’t think you were so smart!”  
“I thought you were more scatterbrained than this,” said George.

When quotes are incorporated into sentences, they need either a comma or no punctuation

*Ex:* She told me that I could “sing like a bird.”

Commas should appear on each side of explanatory words that interrupt a quote. A comma and period is appropriate if such words interrupt two sentences or more.

*Ex:* “One day we were so happy,” he said, “and then the next day we’d be miserable.”

*Ex:* “I like coffee,” she said. “Forget tea.”