Quotation marks are used in academic writing to indicate to readers that the writer is either quoting material from another source or that they are mentioning the title of a shorter work.

When to use quotation marks in academic and creative writing

Use quotation marks to include a direct quotation in your writing. If the quotation is a full sentence, the first word inside of the quoted material is always upper case, even if it starts midsentence. The quotation should appear word for word; otherwise, it would be paraphrased and not put in quotation marks. (For more information regarding summarizing and paraphrasing source material, see our *Summarizing and Paraphrasing* handout.)

### Example:

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| She said,“This is useful information.” |

You do not capitalize the first word of a quotation if it is a continuation of the sentence.

### Example:

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| --- |
| She said that we would find“useful information”in the handout. |

Use quotation marks to note titles of shorter works, such as chapter titles in a book, episodes of a TV series, individual songs, titles of articles or essays, poems, or short stories. Longer works are typically italicized, while shorter works that are typically a part of other publications use quotation marks, such as a journal article.

### Example:

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| Stephanie found information in the article“Environmental Changes in Florida”that helped her write a research paper.Jeremy’s favorite song is “Stayin’ Alive” because it is extra groovy. |

Period and comma use with quotation marks

Phrases that introduce quotes are called “signal phrases.” Signal phrases that are comprised of a dependent clause, a phrase, or a dialogue tag need to be connected to the quote that they are introducing by using a comma. (For more information regarding comma usage, see our *Commas* handout.)

### Example:

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| --- |
| The student said**,** “I’m glad this handout was so useful.” |

If the quoted material appears after the signal phrase **and** ends the sentence, place the terminal (ending) period inside of the quotation marks.

### Example:

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| The student said, “I’m glad this handout was so useful**.**” |

If the quoted material appears before the signal phrase **and does not** end the sentence,then the quotation is ended with a comma. This is the case even if the quotation is only one word. (For more information regarding how to structure dialogue, see our *Creative Writing: Dialogue* handout.)

### Example:

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| “I’m glad this handout was so useful,” she said. |

Question mark use with quotation marks

If the question mark is part of the original quotation, or if the quotes material is the question, place the question mark inside of the quotation marks.

### Example:

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| The student asked, “Would you like to borrow my handout**?**” |

If the whole sentence is a question, place the question mark outside of the quotation and at the end of the sentence.

### Example:

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| Did she say, “You can borrow my handout”? |

Colon and semicolon use with quotation marks

When using a colons and semicolons within sentences that contain quoted material, place the colon or semicolon outside of the quotation marks. This is to show that the punctuation is a part of the whole sentence, not just what is contained within the quotation marks. (For more information regarding colons and semicolons, see our *Common Punctuation Points* handout).

### Example:

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| Amanda described the two characteristics of what she calls a “perfect handout”**:** easy to read and packed with useful information. |

### Example:

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| The writing consultant described the handout as “very helpful”; many students agreed.  |

Punctuation after quotations with in-text citations

Normally, when ending a sentence with a quotation, place the period inside of the quotation marks. The exception to that rule is if a parenthetical reference follows the quotation. In that case, place the period after the closing parenthesis. (For more information on in-text citations, see one of our many formatting style guides.)

### Example:

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| **MLA example**:The author states that “the handout was very useful for many students” (Souchik 14)**.**In this case, the period was placed at the end of the sentence (after the in-text citation) to note that the sentence ends after the parenthetical reference. Note that in this example there is no need for a comma before the quotation marks because the sentence makes grammatical sense without it (the signal phrase is not a dependent clause, phrase, or dialogue tag). |

### Example:

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| **APA example**: According to research conducted by Forrest and Compagnucci, “many students find handouts to be useful when they are learning new ideas” (Forrest & Compagnucci, 2017, p. 43)**.**In this example, the period is placed after the ending parenthesis to note that the sentence includes the parenthetical reference. In this example the signal phrase is also a dependent clause, so it needs to be connected to the quote by a comma. |