

How to Use Quotation Marks for Dialogue or Speaking

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Quotation marks basics

- Quotation marks appear in pairs, one at the beginning of the quote and one at the end of the quote.
- A direct quotation begins with a capital letter unless it is a sentence fragment or an interrupted thought
- Quotation marks can not be used for indirect quotations, they can't be statements that summarize or paraphrase a person's words

Punctuation

- **Periods** and **commas** always go **inside** the quotation
- **question marks** and **exclamation marks** go **inside** the quotations when the quoted material is a question or an exclamation
- **question marks** and **exclamation marks** go **outside** when the whole statement, not just the quoted material, is a question or exclamation

Examples

“Come back next week,” the doctor told Bob.

- The comma is inside of the quotation marks.

He asked, “Where are they now?”

- The quote is a question, therefore the question mark is inside of the quotation marks.

Who said, “To err is human”?

- The whole statement is a question and the quote is not a question, so the question mark is outside of the quotation marks

Dialogue Rules

- If one person's words are longer than one paragraph, you begin each new paragraph with quotation marks, but do not add closing quotation marks until the quote ends
- Every time you change speakers you begin a new paragraph

Test Question

1. “I am taking the ACT next month”, John said.
 - A. No Change
 - B. next month,
 - C. next month,”
 - D. next month.”

Answer to Question

- The answer is C because commas always go in the quotation marks no matter if they connect with the dialogue or the outside sentence.