

Use quotation marks to show that you are writing the exact words that someone said or wrote.

General Usage

- Enclose direct quotations in quotation marks.

Example: “Finally.” My mother rose to her feet. “Your father is home.”

- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

Example: She said, “People who say ‘Let me be honest with you’ seldom are.”

- Use quotation marks when quoting a specific word or phrase.

Example: One engineer called the company’s drug-testing program “a paranoid reaction.”

Dialogue – Conversation between Two or More People

When writing dialogue, start a new paragraph every time the speaker changes.

“Father,” I said, finally.

“Yes?”

“Kikuko tells me Watanabe-San took his whole family with him.”

My father lowered his eyes and nodded. For some moments he seemed deep in thought. “Watanabe was very devoted to his work,” he said at last. “The collapse of the firm was a great blow to him. I fear it must have weakened his judgment.”

“You think what he did – it was a mistake?”

“Why, of course. Do you see it otherwise?”

“No, no. Of course not.”

“There are other things besides work.”

“Yes.”

--Excerpt from “A Family Supper” by Kazuo Ishiguro

Note: Each speaker’s actions are in the same paragraph as his or her dialogue.

Special Usage

- Use italics (not quotation marks) for foreign words.

Examples: Maria felt *simpatico* toward the rebel forces.

The major style guides (MLA, APA, etc.) have different rules on when to use italics and when to use quotation marks in the cases below. Please consult the style guide you're using in class, or ask your professor if he or she has a preference.

- Use italics or quotation marks with technical terms that would be unfamiliar to most readers.

Examples: Ecologists define a *chryocore* as a region of perpetual ice and snow.
Ecologists define a "chryocore" as a region of perpetual ice and snow.

- Use italics or quotation marks when singling out a word for emphasis or definition.

Examples: I often confuse the words *accept* and *except*.
I often confuse the words "accept" and "except."

Italic is a style of printing in which the letters slant to the right.
"Italic" is a style of printing in which the letters slant to the right.

Punctuation Used with Quotation Marks

- Periods and commas *always* go inside the closing quotation marks.

Examples:

"Registration begins next week," she said. "You can see an advisor then."
When I asked him if he wanted another piece of cake, he replied, "Yes."

- Question marks and exclamation points go inside the closing quotation marks when the entire quoted sentence forms a question or an exclamation.

Example: "Where are they now?" She shouted, "The dam broke!"

- Question marks and exclamation points go outside the closing quotation marks when the entire sentence forms a question or an exclamation.

Example: Who said, "To err is human"?

- A direct quotation begins with a capital letter unless it is a sentence fragment or an interrupted thought.

Examples: The travel agent said, "Our city is usually warm in the spring."
"Once," said Madeline, "my family rode a train to Maine."