



When you want to denote a different speaker in writing—**displaying that the words are coming from somebody other than the established author**—surrounding the extraneous words in quotation marks is the way to do it.

Quotation marks come in two forms: double quotes (“ ”) and single quotes (‘ ’). In American English, the default is to use double quotes, and only use single quotes when there is a case of double quoting—a quote within a quote.

Standard quoting:

Sam let out a sigh. Already the weather was making a mess of her flattened hair. “Are you going to disappear on me, too?”

Double quoting:

The character Sam’s exasperation is visible in both her mannerisms and her words, as she “let out a sigh. Already the weather was making a mess of her flattened hair. ‘Are you going to disappear on me, too?’”

Double quotes house the entirety of the quote, to indicate that the words are from a different source. The quote within the quote is denoted using the single quotes inside.

Note that the question mark at the end goes inside of the quotation marks (specifically the inner, single quotes), since it belongs to the sentence within the quotes, not any of the material outside. Whether punctuation falls inside or outside the quotation marks depends on the circumstances.

● Standards for Punctuation and Quotes in American English ●

1. Periods and commas fall **inside** the quotation marks.

“We learned about the solar system in school today,” Cindy told her dad, grabbing an apple to snack on, “and the teacher said the moon is one fourth the size of Earth.”

2. ...unless there are parentheses immediately after, in which case the comma or period comes **after the parentheses**. (*See parentheses handout*)

In her book exploring sociolinguistics and gender, Coates (2004) asserts that “by asking ‘do women and men talk differently,’ we make a series of assumptions” (p. 3).

3. Question marks, exclamation points, and M-dashes are included within the quotation marks **IF they belong to the quote** and not to the sentence the quote is within.

Source material: ...the immediate aroma that hit me was happiness. But happiness is such a jejune bouquet, *n’est-ce pas?* (Faith Salie, *Approval Junkie*, p. 150)

Salie’s reaction to her partner telling her he loved her, she writes, was happy—but a very thin and fleeting joy, since “happiness is such a jejune bouquet, *n’est-ce pas?*”

4. If the question mark, exclamation point, or M-dash **belongs to the sentence housing the quote** and not to the quote itself, it goes outside the quotation marks.

Even if she doesn't say so outright, isn't Salie's dissatisfaction with her partner evident from her description of the happiness he brought her as "such a jejune bouquet"?

5. **Semicolons and colons should never end a quote.** If your quote ends with a semicolon or a colon, you can ignore it and use whatever punctuation is appropriate for your own sentence. If your own sentence requires a semicolon or colon immediately after a quote, put it outside of the quotation marks:

My son, as his dad says, is "a baby superman"; he began walking long before his first birthday and began speaking soon after.

The important thing to keep in mind when using quotes in academic writing is that whenever you use somebody else's words, you must cite them to tell your reader that the ideas are not yours.

Of course, quoting somebody else's work directly isn't the only time you should cite another source; paraphrased and summarized information must also be cited. Anything that can't be categorized as common knowledge or concepts originated from your own work should be shown in your writing with a citation to credit the originator of the information (*see documentation handouts*).