Punctuating Quotations

QUOTATION MARKS:
Left quotation marks are used to open a quote and show that quoted material begins here: “
Right quotation marks show where quoted material ends and the author’s voice begins again: ”

Material inside of quotation marks is word for word from the source, in the same order the words appear in the source, with no words omitted.

WHEN TO USE WHICH PUNCTUATION:

Commas should be used after a “talking verb” such as “said,” “replied,” or “wrote” that introduces the quote.

• He asked, “Where would you like to go?”
• “Take us to the movies,” she said.

Commas should also be used to close a quote that ends with a speaker tag (she said, according to Jefferson ...)

• “Take us to the movies,” she said, “and afterward, let’s go to dinner.”

Commas should also be used in a quote sandwich that continues the same sentence after the speaker tag.

• “Take us to the movies,” she said, “and afterward, let’s go to dinner.”

Periods should be used in a quote sandwich that continues with a complete sentence after the speaker tag.

• “Take us to the movies,” she said. “There’s a new one out I haven’t seen.”

No punctuation should be used when a quote seamlessly runs into the sentence without a talking verb.

• He explained the renovation would take “approximately eight weeks.”

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There’s often confusion about where punctuation such as periods and commas should go when they’re presented as part of a quotation. However, students can resolve this dilemma with one simple rule (and one simple exception): In all cases except when using parenthetical citation, punctuation will appear inside the quotation marks.

Examples:
✓ COMMA: "Let your soul stand cool and composed among a million universes," Walt Whitman wrote.
✓ PERIOD: In Song of the Open Road, Walt Whitman writes, “Henceforth I ask not good fortune. I myself am good fortune.”
✓ QUESTION MARK: “Have you learned the lessons only of those who admired you, and were tender with you, and stood aside for you? Have you not learned great lessons from those who braced themselves against you and disputed passage with you?” Walt Whitman points out.

When using parenthetical citation, punctuation will appear outside the quotation marks.

Examples:
✓ MLA: The command given in “Song of Myself” reads, “Let your soul stand cool and composed among a million universes,” (Whitman 7).
✓ APA: Song of the Open Road issues the declaration, “Henceforth I ask not good fortune. I myself am good fortune” (Whitman 21).