

QUOTATION MARKS

Problem

Single (‘ ’) and double (“ ”) quotation marks have distinct purposes that are often confused. When you misuse quotation marks, readers may not be able to tell when you are quoting another writer or using language in a specialized way. In addition, use of quotation marks in American English differs from British English, which can cause problems for international students.

Solutions

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN USING QUOTATION MARKS IN AMERICAN AND BRITISH ENGLISH.

The rules about using double and single quotation marks in American English are the exact opposite of the rules for using them in British English. In addition, the rules for using other punctuation with quotation marks differ between the two systems (periods and commas go inside quotation marks in American English but outside quotation marks in British). If you learned English under the British system, be careful when checking your usage.

PLACE DOUBLE QUOTATION MARKS AROUND . . .

- **exact wording taken from a source to show where it begins and ends.**
Susan Jarratt believes “recognition of and argument over differences” leads to opportunities to improve classroom dynamics (114).
As Diana Hacker points out, “most experienced writers handle a piece of writing in stages” (3).
- **a title of a shorter work, such as an article, poem, or short story**
In “Introducing Internet Blogs,” West discusses the uses of blogs in his classes.
“Young Goodman Brown,” by Nathaniel Hawthorne, is a classic short story.
- **character dialogue in narrative writing**
John said, “I would like to have my order sometime today.”
“No,” sighed Lisa, “I really don’t want to go to a movie tonight.”
- **words when you are referring to them as a word or a label**
When using conjunctions like “therefore,” be sure to include correct punctuation.
The word “gender” evokes strong emotional and societal connotations.

Exception: The Sixth Edition of the APA Publication Manual directs writers to use italics, not quotation marks, to refer to words as words.

The word *gender* evokes strong emotional and societal connotations.

ONLY USE SINGLE QUOTATION MARKS WITHIN DOUBLE QUOTATION MARKS. Single quotation marks help readers distinguish...

- **a quotation that is within text you are quoting.**

According to Bruenger, “Susan Jarratt believes ‘recognition of and argument over differences’ leads to opportunities to improve classroom dynamics” (1).

- **a title within a title.**

“Hawthorne’s ‘Young Goodman Brown’: Early Nineteenth-Century and Puritan Constructions of Gender,” by James C. Keil

WHEN USING QUOTATION MARKS, REMEMBER . . .

- **to use them in pairs.**

Incorrect: John said, I would like to have my order sometime today.”

Correct: John said, “I would like to have my order sometime today.”

Incorrect: As Diana Hacker points out, “most experienced writers handle a piece of writing in stages (3).

Correct: As Diana Hacker points out, “most experienced writers handle a piece of writing in stages” (3).

- **not to put spaces between the quotation marks and the words they go around.**

Incorrect: The word “ gender ” evokes strong emotional and societal connotations.

Correct: The word “gender” evokes strong emotional and societal connotations.

Incorrect: “ The Raven, ” by Edgar Allen Poe, is an American example of the gothic poem.

Correct: “The Raven,” by Edgar Allen Poe, is an American example of the gothic poem.

- **to put end punctuation inside the quotation marks, unless you are asking a question about the quote itself.**

Incorrect: Include correct punctuation when using conjunctions like “therefore”.

Correct: Include correct punctuation when using conjunctions like “therefore.”

Incorrect: “No”, sighed Lisa, “I really don’t want to go to a movie tonight”.

Correct: “No,” sighed Lisa, “I really don’t want to go to a movie tonight.”

Incorrect: Did Lisa just say, “I really don’t want to go to a movie tonight?”

Correct: Did Lisa just say, “I really don’t want to go to a movie tonight”?

Note: Each citation style, like MLA or APA, has its own rules for using other punctuation with quotation marks. Check a style guide to see how to punctuate quotes properly in your discipline.

Works Cited

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer’s Reference*. 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003. Print.

Jarratt, Susan. “Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict.” *Contending With Words: Composition and Rhetoric in a Postmodern Age*. Eds. Patricia Harkin and John Schilb. New York: MLA, 1991. 105–23. Print.

Keil, James C. “Hawthorne’s ‘Young Goodman Brown’: Early Nineteenth-Century and Puritan Constructions of Gender.” *New England Quarterly: A Historical Review of New England Life and Letters* 69.1 (1996): 33–55. Print.

For more information:

Hacker, Diana, and Nancy Sommers. *A Writer’s Reference*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2011. 281–86. Print.