

Quotation Marks with Commas and Periods

“Don’t underestimate me,” she said with a disarmingly friendly smile.

I can never remember how to spell “bureaucracy.”

Quotation Marks with Semicolons, Colons, and Dashes

First, let’s review the easy (but rare) stuff: semicolons, colons, and dashes always go outside quotation marks:

Marshall snorted and said, “I don’t believe in zombies”—right before thirty of them emerged from the tunnel.

Her favorite song was “Gangnam Style”; she spent weeks trying to learn the dance.

She sang her favorite line from “How Far I’ll Go”: “See the line where the sky meets the sea? It calls me.”

Quotation Marks with Question Marks and Exclamation Points

If the question mark or exclamation point is part of your quotation, it stays inside; but if the question mark or exclamation point are not part of the quotation, they go outside the closing quotation mark.

In the next examples, the terminal punctuation is part of the quotation, so it stays inside the final quotation mark:

Holden asked, “Can we have ice cream for dinner?”

Mom, exasperated, shouted, “No, we cannot have ice cream for dinner!”

On the other hand, in these examples, the terminal punctuation is not part of the quotation—it applies to the whole sentence—so it goes outside the final quotation mark:

Do you actually like “The Cupid Shuffle”?

I can’t believe you lied to me about the ending of “How I Met Your Mother”!

End Punctuation for Quotations

If your sentence ends with a comma, do not include it in quotation marks. Only use one comma after the citation.

Scout explains, “From then on, we considered everything we found in the knot-hole our property” (Lee 66).

If your quote needs end punctuation, such as a quotation mark or exclamation mark, include it in the quote.

Juliet asked, “Wherefore art thou, Romeo?” (II.i.45).