

PUNCTUATING QUOTATIONS

We use **quotation marks** to show that we are quoting someone’s exact words. Observe the following rules:

- (1) Use a *comma* to separate a quotation from the rest of the sentence. Use a colon instead of the comma to introduce a long or weighty quotation.

Standard Quotation: People began to say, “Less is more.”

Quotation First: “There shall be no private ownership of streams,” Brigham Young decreed.

Formal Quotation: She stood up slowly and announced: “This is our final offer.”

Use two commas if a statement of your own interrupts a quoted sentence. Use a comma *before* your statement and a period *after* it if it interrupts two complete sentences.

Interrupted: “The approval,” the inspector said, “has to come from my superior.”
“Divorce is not the problem,” the article said, “The problem is how to handle it.”

- (2) Commas or periods stay *inside* the quotation marks when a quotation ends or is interrupted. (A semicolon usually stays outside). Keep question marks and exclamation marks *inside* the quotation marks—unless your question (or exclamation) is *about* the quotation. Use no additional comma or period if some other mark (such as a question mark) already ends a quotation.

“Do you believe me?” he finally asked. | She said, “Quit opening doors for me!”
Why does he always say, “Time will tell”? | He said to me, “Let’s just be friends”!

- (3) Use *no* comma or colon to set off quoted words and phrases that you have lifted out of a longer statement.

Quoted Words: He was always denouncing “the old corrupt politics.”
The mayor claimed that the “Irish mafia” was out to get him.

- (4) Use *single* quotation marks to mark a quotation within a quotation.

Single Marks: I quote the minutes: “The president rose and, pointing at Mr. S., shouted:
‘You’re through!’”

- (5) Use *no* quotation marks or other special punctuation to set off *indirect* quotations. These merely give the gist of what someone else said, without using the exact words. Many indirect quotations start with *that*, or with question words like *when*, *where*, *how*, *why*, *who*, *which*, and *what*.

Direct: He asked me: “Why do you always make fun of me?”

Indirect: He asked me why I always made fun of him.

Direct: Susan announced: “Communications have broken down.”

Indirect: Susan announced that communication had been broken down.

Insert appropriate punctuation in the following passages.

1. The romantic stranger whispered ___ Come away with me into the night ___
2. ___ Killer whales ___ the manual declared ___ are extremely ferocious ___
3. ___ Step back ___ Dr. Spelworst shouted ___
4. My mother turned very serious and said ___ Don't ever say to yourself ___ I'm not good at anything ___
5. ___ Every group of whales has its own repertory of sounds ___ Johnson explained ___
6. The sergeant reported ___ that had picked up the robbers seven blocks away ___
7. She kept asking me ___ why don't people do something to save the environment ___
8. ___ Can I go and look for him ___ Tommy asked ___
9. ___ Has a complete stranger ever stopped and said to you ___ I cannot live without you ___
10. ___ Surrender the key ___ the despicable Dr. Spelworst said ___ or I'll blow this whole mountain sky-high ___
11. The little boy told us ___ that he was allergic to just about anything ___
12. He told us ___ what could be done about social activities ___
13. ___ That's a great name for a pup ___ she said ___
14. ___ The devils ___ the elder said ___ will again search the land for their own kind ___
15. She looked at me and said ___ where am I supposed to turn ___
16. ___ The speedometer ___ the sheriff's report continued ___ was stuck at 67 miles an hour ___
17. ___ Nudist aren't nuts ___ the association's director declared ___ They simply believe that nudity is the greatest common denominator ___
18. ___ The review called the tragedy ___ a powerful and moving antiwar play ___
19. ___ But why did you have to change your name ___ she asked ___
20. The stationery carried the new slogan of the association ___ Dare to be bare ___