

Quotation Marks Grammatical Rules

A *direct quotation* is a person's exact words, just as they were said.

Example: Fred's last words were, "Don't worry, there are no sharks in the water."

Don't confuse a direct quotation with a *paraphrase*, or indirect quotation, which is a retelling of a person's words *not* as they were spoken.

Example: Fred's last advice was that we shouldn't worry because there weren't any sharks in the water.

1. A direct quotation starts with a capital letter.

Example: I heard him say, "Give me the money."

2. If the quotation is only a fragment of a sentence, do *not* begin the quote with a capital letter.

Example: The gunman said he wanted the money "in my gym bag."

3. When a quoted sentence is broken by an expression like *he said*, a comma follows the expression, and the second part of the quote begins with quotation marks and a lower-case letter.

Example: "Stay on the floor," he said, "or I'll do something drastic!"

4. A direct quotation is always set off from the rest of the sentence by commas, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

Example: John Lennon said, "Give peace a chance."

"What did you say to me?" asked the bully

"Don't move!" shouted the police officer.

5. Commas and periods are always placed inside of quotation marks.

Example: "Many critics," said the professor, "call Poe the father of the short story."

6. Place a question mark or an exclamation point inside the closing quotation marks if the quotation itself *is* a question or exclamation; otherwise place them outside of the quotation marks.

Example: "Does everyone have a pencil?" asked the teacher.

"Get out of here!" shouted the firefighter.

Who whispered, "I bought a cheat sheet"?

There are still some people who claim that they “can’t afford a smoke detector”!

7. The titles of short works-essays, poems, chapters, songs, articles-are enclosed in quotation marks. (Full-length works are underlined or italicized.)

Example: “How I Spent My Summer Vacation.”

“Stairway to Heaven.”

“Politics and the English Language.”

8. When you write *dialogue* (speech between characters), begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.

Exercise Sheet

Group names:

Date _____

Directions: Your group is to edit the following paragraph using the *Quotation Marks Grammatical Rules* sheet as a guide. Change punctuation marks and capitalization as necessary, add quotation marks, and mark with a paragraph symbol (¶) where new paragraphs should begin. HINT: remember to start a new paragraph each time the speaker changes. It's also customary to separate narration (the story line) from the dialogue to add a new paragraph.

It was a sultry, hot summer day in Dark Gulch when Jake Coleman pushed open the swinging doors to Sam's Saloon and strode in. Where's the sheriff demanded Jake in an arrogant tone. Over here came the sheriff's voice from a table near the back. I been waiting on ya, Jake. What took you so long? By now the tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife. People were quietly, but purposefully, scurrying out of the line of fire between the two enemies. You oughta know what took you so long said Jake. You're the one who sent me away. So now you are back, huh, asked the sheriff. Tell me Jake, just what you got on your mind. Only this, said Jake disdainfully as he threw down the words and music to a song called Big Pen Blues that he's written while he was in jail. With that the sheriff pushed himself away from his table and walked over, picked up the paper, and brought it to where the barkeeper was sitting at the piano. Play it, Sam exclaimed the sheriff. Yeah, let's hear it, said Jake as he brought the sheriff a beer.