



## Quotation Basics: Using Quotations in Your Writing

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Why should you use quotations?

- You will appear more knowledgeable
- Your writing will look stronger and more professional
- You can make a more convincing argument in writing
- By using quotations correctly, you can show that you are familiar with the conventions of academic writing.

In the example sentences below, the quotation marks and punctuation are in red and are bolded to make them easier to see.

**Ideally, make the point in your own words first, and then use a quotation to support the point you made.** If you use quotations to make the point (instead of doing it in your own words), it may look as though

- You are a lazy writer
- You don't trust your own opinions

### British English

Use single quotation marks.

Place all punctuation outside of the quotation marks unless the punctuation was a question mark or an exclamation mark that was part of the original quote”

When the homeowners refused to leave their home, the fire fighter yelled at them: ‘Don’t you understand that the forest fire could be here at any moment?’

My mother said, ‘Don’t forget to invite your cousin to the wedding’.

According to Casanave, ‘Students may find the relatively brief and superficial writing tasks they did as undergraduates did not prepare them for the more extended research-based literacy activities in graduate school’ (2008, p.214).

### American English

Use double quotation marks.

Commas and periods should go inside quotation marks unless the quotation is followed by a parenthetical citation. In that case they go behind the parenthetical citation. Question marks and exclamation marks also go inside *if* they were part of the original quote. Other kinds of punctuation (like semicolons and colons) go outside the quotation marks!

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According to Casanave, “Students may find the relatively brief and superficial writing tasks they did as undergraduates did not prepare them for the more extended research-based literacy activities in graduate school” (2008).

### A Quote within a Quote

**British English.** Use single quotation marks on the outside and double quotation marks on the inside.

My college economics professor said to me, ‘I wish I had known that “a penny saved is a penny earned” when I was your age!’

**American English.** Use double quotation marks on the outside and single quotation marks on the inside.

My college economics professor said to me, “I wish I had known that ‘a penny saved is a penny earned’ when I was your age!”

If your quote within a quote comes at the beginning or the end of your quotation (in British or American English), you will have three quotation marks together:

When my friend asked me what she should do about the mistake she made at work, I told her, “You should tell your boss what happened. In situations like this, ‘honesty is always the best policy.’”

**IMPORTANT:** Any time you quote material from a publication (like a book, newspaper, article, or website), you should use a citation to show exactly where you found that material, and you should have a References or Works Cited page at the end of your essay that lists all of the sources you cited from in a particular style. MLA and APA are two of the most commonly used styles, but some fields use different style guides.

This lesson did not cover citations, but you can find great information on how to do citations at the University of Purdue’s Online Writing Lab (OWL). Please see the links below:

OWL APA Style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

OWL MLA Style: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

### References

Casanave, C. (2008). *Learning the literacy practices of graduate school: Insiders’ reflections on academic enculturation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press