Bracken Business Communications Clinic

PUNCTUATION

QUOTATION MARKS ( “…” or ‘…’ )

Quotation marks are used to enclose and set off text that is directly quoted, titles, technical terms, and words or phrases that carry a subtext.

USES

Use quotation marks to enclose

• a short direct quote (a quote of no more than 40 words).
• a title of short works, such as titles of articles, essays, book chapters, songs, films, and poems.
• a word or short phrase that is meant to express irony or sarcasm.
• slang that is out of character with the rest of the writing or to enclose a deliberate misspelling.

Do not use quotation marks to enclose

• a colloquial expression.
• a long direct quote (a quote more than 40 words).
  o Set apart a long quote by indenting five spaces from both margins and introducing the quote with a colon.
• an indirect quotation, which is usually introduced by that.
  e.g., The meteorologist said that it will rain tomorrow. < Correct (indirect quote)
  The meteorologist said that, “it will rain tomorrow.” < Incorrect (indirect quote)
  The meteorologist said, “It will rain tomorrow.” < Correct (direct quote)

PLACEMENT OF PUNCTUATION WHEN USING QUOTATION MARKS

Punctuation placed inside quotation marks

• Periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation marks are enclosed within quotation marks.
  o Exception: If the question or exclamation mark punctuates the sentence as a whole, the question mark or exclamation mark falls outside the quotation marks.
    e.g., Have you heard the proverb, “Do not count your chickens until they hatch”?
Punctuation placed outside quotation marks
• Colons and semi-colons appear outside quotation marks.
• Parentheses with in-text citation fall outside quotation marks.

Note: Never duplicate punctuation. When the quoted sentence uses the same punctuation as the main sentence, enclose the punctuation within the quotation marks.

SINGLE QUOTATION MARKS
• Use single quotation marks to enclose a direct quotation within another direct quotation.
• Insert a space between the single and the double quotation.
• Apply the rules for placement of punctuation provided above.

   e.g., Dorothy Parker once said, “The most beautiful words in the English language are ‘Check enclosed.’ ”