Quotation Marks and Apostrophes
The Academic Center, St. Joseph’s College, Brooklyn

Quotation Marks:
Quotation marks have many important uses. They are used to set off quoted or spoken language and also to indicate the titles of short stories, poems and articles. In the case of quoted material, it is imperative to use quotation marks to indicate material from outside sources. Otherwise, the writer leaves himself open to charges of plagiarism.

Uses:
- To set off material that represents quoted or spoken language
- To indicate the titles of short stories, poems and articles

When to Use Quotation Marks:

Direct Quotations involve incorporating a writer’s exact words into your own document. Be sure to include citation indicating the source. This will vary according to citation method (MLA, APA, Chicago etc.). Choose direct quotations carefully, citing material that is meaningful and unique. Try not to waste a quote on a thought that can easily be paraphrased.

Example: According to legendary hostess Dolly Madison, “An elegant table setting always includes decorative, well placed candlesticks.”

Indirect Quotations: If you are paraphrasing a writer’s words, you do not use quotation marks. However, remember that all standard citation rules still apply. You must indicate your source.

Dialogue: Write each person’s spoken words, however brief, as a separate paragraph. Use commas to set off dialogue tags such as "she said" or "he explained." If one person’s speech goes on for more than one paragraph, use quotation marks to open the dialogue at the beginning of each paragraph. However, do not use closing quotation marks until the end of the final paragraph where that character is speaking.

Example: “I will never forget your kindness,” May sobbed.
    “It was nothing,” Cindy replied, “but a simple act.”

Quotation within a Quotation:
Example: Stephanie said, “When I talked to mama, she told me to ‘make sure the clothes are washed and put away.’”

To Indicate Titles:
- Titles of short or minor works
- Songs
- Short Stories
- Essays
- Short Poems
- One Act Plays
- Other literary works shorter than a three act play or complete book
- Titles of sections from longer works
- Chapters in books
- Articles in newspapers, magazines, or journals
- Episodes of television and radio series

To Indicate Words Used Ironically:
Example: Joe’s “thesis” was a mere four pages long.
Note: Do not use quotation marks for words used as words themselves. In this case, you should use italics.
Example: In French, the word for convenience store is dépanneur.
**Rules:**
- Quotation marks always travel in pairs. You must close a quote once you open it.
- Capitalize the first letter of a direct quote when the quoted material is a complete sentence.
- Do not use a capital letter when the quoted material is a fragment or only a piece of the original material's complete sentence.
- If a direct quotation is interrupted mid-sentence, do not capitalize the second part of the quotation.
- A comma is used after a standard dialogue tag, a brief introductory phrase, or a dependent clause.
- In the United States, periods and commas go inside quotation marks, except when a parenthetical reference follows.
- Place colons and semicolons outside closed quotation marks.
- Place a question mark or exclamation point within closing quotation marks if the punctuation applies to the quotation itself. Place the punctuation outside the closing quotation marks if the punctuation applies to the whole sentence.
- Quotations are most effective if you use them sparingly and keep them relatively short. Too many quotations in a research paper will get you accused of not producing original thought or material (they may also bore a reader who wants to know primarily what YOU have to say on the subject).

**Practice: Add quotations, punctuation and capitalization as necessary**

1. My favorite poem is Vladimir Mayakovsky’s A Cloud in Trousers
2. I love A Cloud in Trousers however I don’t think it’s as good as Anna Akhmatova’s Requiem
3. She told me always find at least three reliable sources before starting a research paper
4. She described the day as dreary, gray and utterly depressing
5. Carlos said do you want to get ice cream
6. Does mom always say this is the worst pizza ever
7. Sure it’s chilly Richard said but still nice.
8. The reporter told me when I interviewed the quarterback, he said they simply played a better game
9. In this case, progress means that millions of people are now disenfranchised.
10. According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, a tragedy is a medieval narrative poem or tale typically describing the downfall of a great man
Apostrophes: *(Source - The Purdue OWL)*

**Uses:**
- To form possessives of nouns
- To show the omission of letters
- To indicate certain plurals of lowercase letters

**Forming Possessives of Nouns:**
Ask, does the item belong to someone or something? And if so, does it belong to a single owner, or a group? If so, you need to make the noun possessive.

*Example:* The dog’s bone (singular possessive)
The boys’ soccer team (plural possessive)

**Rules:**
- Add ‘s to the singular form of the word, even if it ends in s (the cat’s dish)
- For plural, proper nouns that are possessive, use an apostrophe after the s’ (Jones’ car)
- Add ‘s to the plural forms that do not end in an s (children’s games)
- Add ‘ to the end of plural nouns that end in -s (two cats’ toys)
- Add ‘s to the end of compound words (brother-in-law’s money)
- Add ‘s to the last noun to show joint possession of an object (Todd and Anne’s apartment)

**Showing Omission of Letters:**
Apostrophes are used in contractions. A contraction is a word (or set of numbers) in which one or more letters (or numbers) have been omitted. The apostrophe shows this omission. Contractions are common in speaking and in informal writing. To use an apostrophe to create a contraction, place an apostrophe where the omitted letter(s) would go. Here are some examples:

don’t = do not
I’m = I am
he’ll = he will

**Forming Plurals of Lowercase Letters:**
Apostrophes are used to form plurals of letters that appear in lowercase; here the rule appears to be more typographical than grammatical, e.g. “three ps” versus “three p’s.” To form the plural of a lowercase letter, place ‘s after the letter. There is no need for apostrophes indicating a plural on capitalized letters, numbers, and symbols (though keep in mind that some editors, teachers, and professors still prefer them). Here are some examples:

three Macintosh G4s = three of the Macintosh model G4
many &s = many ampersands
the 1960s = the years in decade from 1960 to 1969

There are three G4s currently used in the writing classroom.
That printed page has too many &s on it.
The 1960s were a time of great social unrest.
The ‘60s were a time of great social unrest.

**Practice:** *(add apostrophes and the plural s as needed)*
1. The group made its decision.
2. I borrowed Jim’s book then accidentally left it out in the rain.
3. The Jones dog is out of control.
4. I spent the weekend at Jim and Sophie’s cabin.
5. Peas and carrots are not my favorite vegetables.
6. That book was written in the 60s, but its still relevant today.
7. Wouldn’t it be great if we were allowed to have class in the park?
8. Let’s buy the book that fully explains the country’s road systems.
9. James’ new hat used to be Joe’s old one.
10. The geese’s pond is looking very murky.
**Answers (quotations):**

1. My favorite poem is Vladimir Mayakovsky’s “A Cloud in Trousers.”
2. I love “A Cloud in Trousers”; however, I don’t think it’s as good as Anna Akhmatova’s “Requiem.”
3. She told me, “Always find at least three reliable sources before starting a research paper.”
4. She described the day as “dreary, gray and utterly depressing.”
5. Carlos said, “Do you want to get ice cream?”
6. Does mom always say, “This is the worst pizza ever”?
7. “Sure it’s chilly,” Richard said, “but still nice.”
8. The reporter told me, “When I interviewed the quarterback, he said they simply ‘played a better game.’”
9. In this case, “progress” means that millions of people are now disenfranchised.
10. According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, a *tragedy* is “a medieval narrative poem or tale typically describing the downfall of a great man.”

**Answers (apostrophes):**

1. The group made its decision.
2. I borrowed Jim’s book then accidentally left it out in the rain.
3. The Jones’ dog is out of control.
4. I spent the weekend at Jim and Sophie’s cabin.
5. Peas and carrots are not my favorite vegetables.
6. That book was written in the 60s, but it’s still relevant today.
7. Wouldn’t it be great if we were allowed to have class in the park?
8. Let’s buy the book that fully explains the country’s road systems.
9. James’s (or s’) new hat used to be Joe’s old one.
10. The geese’s pond is looking very murky.