THE WRITING CENTER

Punctuating and Formatting Quotations

Introducing Quotations. There are several ways to introduce quotations; each introduction requires different punctuation.

1. Use an independent clause followed by a colon.

> Ex.: Whenever I cook, I like to repeat the witches' chant from *Macbeth*: "Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble."

2. Use a dependent clause followed by a comma.

> Ex. : Activist Angela Davis said, "I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept."

3. Insert a dependent clause, offset by commas, in the middle of a quoted sentence.

> Ex. "Whenever I feel like exercising," cartoonist Paul Terry wrote in 1938, "I just lie down until the feeling goes away."

4. If the quotation contains two sentences, replace the period at the end of the first sentence with a comma, and insert the dependent clause followed by a period. Add the second sentence, enclosed in quotation marks, after the period following the dependent clause.

> Ex. "I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change," said activist Angela Davis. "I am changing the things I cannot accept."

> Note: When a quoted sentence ends in a question mark or an exclamation point, omit the comma preceding the dependent clause.

> Ex: "You like me!" gushed Sally Field during her Oscar acceptance speech. "You really like me!"

5. Add a dependent clause after the end of the quotation and replace the quote's final period with a comma. (As above, if the quotation ends with a question mark or exclamation point, omit the comma.)

> Ex. "I think, therefore I am," wrote philosopher René Descartes.

> Ex. "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?" asks the narrator of the radio program *The Shadow*.

Additional Rules for Punctuating Quotations

- Place commas and periods following quoted material inside the final quotation mark.
  > Ex.: Even though my professor advised, "Make an appointment at the Writing Center early in your writing process," I waited until the last minute.

- If you are using APA- or MLA-style in-text citations, place the citation after the final quotation mark but before the period.
  Ex: In *As You Like It,* Shakespeare writes, "All the world's a stage" (2.7.1037).

- Place other types of punctuation (question marks, colons, semicolons, exclamation points) outside the final quotation mark unless they are part of the quoted material.
  Ex.: Should we believe Plato when he writes, "The beginning is the most important part of the work"?

Formatting a block quote

If your quotation runs longer than three-four lines, format it as a block quote, which requires dropping down a line, omitting quotation marks, and indenting the entire quote. Consult the guidelines for your paper's formatting style (Chicago, MLA, APA, etc.) to determine the indentation length and line spacing within the quotation. When the quotation ends, drop down a line and return to your normal paragraph formatting. Note that a dependent clause preceding the block quote requires a colon rather than a comma.
  Ex. using MLA formatting.:

  As Emily departs in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town,* she says:

  > Good-by, Good-by, world. Good-by, Grover's Corners? Mama
  >
  > and Papa. Good-bye to clocks ticking? and Mama's sunflowers.
  >
  > And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths? and
  >
  > sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for any-
  >
  > body to realize you. Do any human beings ever realize life while
  >
  > they live it? -- every, every minute? (3)

  Here Wilder speaks to the ephemeral beauty of life's mundane moments.