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Additional Punctuation Rules When Using Quotation Marks

Summary:

A rundown of the general rules of when and where to use quotation marks.

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Use a comma to introduce a quotation after a standard dialogue tag, a brief introductory phrase, or a dependent clause.

The detective said, "I am sure who performed the murder."

As D.H. Nachas explains, "The gestures used for greeting others differ greatly from one culture to another."

Put commas and periods within quotation marks, except when a parenthetical reference follows.

He said, "I may forget your name, but I never forget a face."

History is stained with blood spilled in the name of "civilization."

Mullen, criticizing the apparent inaction, writes, "Donahue's policy was to do nothing" (24).

Place colons and semicolons outside closed quotation marks.

Williams described the experiment as "a definitive step forward"; other scientists disagreed.

Benedetto emphasizes three elements of what she calls her "Olympic journey": family support, personal commitment, and great coaching.

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.

Phillip asked, "Do you need this book?"

Does Dr. Lim always say to her students, "You must work harder"?
