

# How to Use Punctuation with Quotation Marks

## Punctuation before quotation marks

Commas and colons can be used before the start of a quote. Commas are used for short quotes; colons for longer quotes.

For example:

The student sighed, “I still don’t understand question marks.”

In their textbook on how to study grammar, Klammer, Schultz and Volpe claim: “As college students, you participate through written and spoken language in a worldwide community in which your linguistic skills are central to your ability as an effective communicator” (5).

## End Punctuation for the sentence

Short punctuation (periods, commas) that is part of the sentence stays inside the quotation marks.

For example:

The diligent student stated, “Punctuation is a useful tool for writing clearly.”

Tall punctuation (question marks, exclamation points, colons, semi-colons, dashes) that is part of the sentence stays outside the quotation marks.

For example:

How many people have ever said, “I don’t like grammar.”?

## Punctuation from the original quote

All punctuation marks that are part of the original quote stay inside the quotation marks.

For example:

Researchers asked participants “How many uses of commas do you think there are?” and most answers were not even close to the actual number.

## Quotes in Quotations

When you have quotation marks in the material you are quoting, these need to be changed to single quotes.

For example:

**Original Text:** Traffic always expands to fill the capacity of a freeway, creating a “demand” for more freeways.

**Quoted in a paper:** According to Gilliam, traffic “always expands to fill the capacity of a freeway, creating ‘demand’ for more freeways.”