

## Notes on Quotations and Punctuation

1. When using in-text, parenthetical citations, the proper form is:

“Quoted text goes here” (Citation).

Paraphrased text goes here (Citation).

2. The exception is when you use an inset quote, which should be done if the quoted passage would exceed three lines. In this case, you indent and single-space the quotation and do not put quotation marks around it. Also, the citation goes after the period, not before. So:

This is a long inset quote that I have chosen to indent and single space, but not put quotation marks around, because it would exceed three lines of text and for some reason the powers that be have decided that quotations which are this long are easier to read if done in this way. (Citation)

3. Footnote indicators always go after all other punctuation:

“This is a quotation.”<sup>1</sup>

Here is a fact that needs a footnote.<sup>2</sup>

4. If there is no parenthetical citation, punctuation marks that follow quoted items are placed inside the quotation marks:

“This quotation is a full sentence and needs a period at the end.”

In this case, I am putting a single word in “quotes,” and the comma goes inside. The same hold when the sentence ends with “something in quotes.” I know this sometimes looks funny, and in Britain, the preferred style is for punctuation to go outside of quotation marks, so you may occasionally encounter that. But we do things our own way in the United States.

One exception would be if “your quotation is followed by a dash”—in which case the dash is outside the quotation marks.

For some reason, another exception is the “semi-colon”; in a situation like this, the semi-colon goes outside the quotation marks.

5. Speaking of the semi-colon... No element of punctuation is more misused and abused than the semi-colon. This is ironic because the semi-colon is almost always an optional punctuation mark; it is very rarely needed. For example, in the sentence I just wrote, the semi-colon could be replaced with a period without any change to the meaning of what I

wrote. In fact, if you are using a semi-colon, and it could not be replaced with a period, then you are probably using it wrong.

The only exception to this is when the semi-colon is used in a list of things that have subordinate phrases enclosed by commas. As you know, most lists are separated by commas:

I went to the store with Bob, Anne, and Sean.

If the elements of the list have modifiers separated by commas, this can be confusing, so we separate the elements with a semi-colon:

I went to the store with Bob, my best friend who recently returned from college; Anne, who shares an apartment with Sue, Stacy, and Laura; and Sean, my college roommate.

Otherwise, if you use a semi-colon, be sure that the clauses on either side are complete sentences (and hence could just as easily be separated by periods). For example:

I went to the store with Bob; we didn't find what we were looking for.

For some reason, students often mistakenly use a semi-colon to introduce a list, as in

I went to the store and bought four things; eggs, butter, milk, and soda.

This is incorrect. Use a colon (:) for this purpose:

I went to the store and bought four things: eggs, butter, milk, and soda.