

Punctuating Quotations

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks, including single quotation marks.

Example: According to Principal Smith, “Nobody benefits from an extended school year.”

- Periods and commas always go inside a quotation within another quotation.

Example: Principal Smith said, “The Head of the U.S. Department of Education said, ‘Whether or not to mandate school in the summer is a district decision.’”

- If a question or exclamation is part of the quoted material, the question mark or exclamation point is placed inside the quotation mark. When the whole sentence except for the section enclosed in quotation marks is a question or exclamation, the question mark or exclamation point goes outside the quotation mark.

Example 1: Principal Smith asked his colleagues, “Do you want to work an extra 20 days this school year?”

Example 2: Do you agree with the school district’s stance that “all schools should operate year round”?

- When both the whole sentence and the part enclosed in quotation marks are questions or exclamations, the question mark or exclamation point goes inside the closing quotation mark.

Example: Who first asked, “Why is there no school during the summer?”

- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation. The period goes inside all quotation marks.

Example: She stated, “When the principal said, ‘The school year is long enough,’ he was absolutely correct.”

- When you want to insert something into a quotation for clarification, place any additional information within square brackets [].

Example: A principal in the Gotham City School District said, “They [the students in the district] have plenty of vacation time.”

- When a quote is three lines or longer, it should be offset in a block. Introduce the quotation with a colon and leave a blank line above and below the quoted material. Single space the quoted material. Quotation marks are not used.

Example: According to a principal in the Gotham City School:

Year-round education takes place in 450 U.S. school districts with very few complaints. In fact, school districts that participate rave about pupils’ achievement levels. They find, to the surprise of some, that their students experience a newfound enthusiasm for learning.

- Ellipses, or three spaced dots (. . .), indicate that part of a quotation has been left out. Ellipses are useful when you want to include only the most relevant words of a quotation. However, any omission must not change the quotation’s original meaning.

Example: Maria Perez, a parent in the Suffolk County Schools, feels, “Children underutilize long summer months . . . spending countless hours watching TV, hanging out, and playing video games.”