



CMOS Quick Reference

Punctuation & Quotations Cheat Sheet

■ Periods & Commas

Always inside closing quotation marks. Example: He called it “a mistake.”

■ Colons & Semicolons

Always outside closing quotation marks. Example: He referred to it as “the incident”; others disagreed.

■ Question & Exclamation Marks

Inside if part of the quote; outside if part of the sentence. Example: She asked, “Are you coming?” / Did she really say “I’m leaving”?

■ Nested Quotations

Double quotes outside, single quotes inside. Example: “She said, ‘I loved *Hamlet*, especially the line “To be or not to be.””

■ Titles of Works

Quotation marks: articles, poems, stories, songs. *Italics*: books, plays, films.

Example: Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” appears in *The Pioneer*.

Style Tip: “Use italics for standalone works; quotes for parts of a whole.”

■ Scare Quotes

Punctuation inside only if part of the word/phrase. Example: He claimed to be an “expert.”

■ Block Quotations

Indented, no quotation marks. Punctuation precedes citation.

■ Dialogue + Action Beats

Punctuation inside dialogue; action after starts a new sentence. Example: “I don’t believe you.” She slammed the door.

Dialogue punctuation: “Let’s go,” she said. “Now.”

■ Ellipses

Three spaced periods (...). Space before/after, except near quotes. At sentence end: Example: “I never thought ... well, it doesn’t matter.” In quoted material, use ellipses to show omissions.

*Achieve correctly spaced periods by typing a period and then Ctrl Shift Space.

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