MC210  Punctuating Quotes

Direct Quotes

Direct quotes — as full sentences or as partial direct quotes — add color, texture and believability to interviews. The best interviews tell the subject’s story in a combination of his or her own words and judicious paraphrasing by the writer.

When to quote directly, when to paraphrase: Direct quotes are best reserved for opinions and meaningful statements that reveal the manner or style of the person being interviewed. If the subject’s answers sum up straightforward information, go ahead and paraphrase it.

This direct quote "I despise all stinking goats," he sneered. ... is stronger than the paraphrase [He said he doesn’t like goats.]

Punctuation

Set full-sentence quotes off from "said" or other attributive verbs with a comma. The same rule applies whether attribution precedes or follows the quote.

He added, “Cats are altogether different.”
"I’m particularly fond of cats, too,” she agreed.

If you’re going to use a lengthy, multi-sentence quote, AP style also permits following the attribution with a colon. This is a more formal style often used with speeches.

When attribution is set within the sentence at a normal break, it should be both preceded and followed by commas.

"I really don’t intend to slight canines," he explained, "but I’m allergic to dogs."

Partial direct quotes are not set off with their own punctuation. (Partials consist of only a phrase or a few words.) This is always true of partial quotes that are introduced by “that” as well as those in which the word “that” may not appear but is implied.

He added that he feels "different about cats."
He called cats "little furry people who don’t interrupt you."

Periods and commas always go inside the quotation marks, no matter what the sense of the entire sentence.

Exclamation points and question marks, as well as dashes and semi-colons, can go within or outside the final quote, depending on the sentence.

When using full and long partial direct quotations, quote only one person in a paragraph. When you change speakers, start a new paragraph. (This does not apply to a series of very short partial direct quotations of only a couple words each.)

When one quote by the same speaker extends to more than one paragraph, add the ending quotation mark only to the final one.

"Said" is a fine verb of attribution, and it’s nearly invisible to readers. It can be repeated; don’t stretch too far for synonyms.

On the other hand, more colorful verbs — when accurate and appropriate — add color and specific detail: shouted, whispered, sneered, confided and so on.
Quoting from Published Sources

“According to” is a standard introduction to published excerpts. No quotation marks are needed for paraphrased information. Standard rules for direct quotations apply to excerpts quoted word for word.

According to the website www.abcnews.com, the drug metformin shows promise in combating cancer.

Republican candidates, according to a story by Fareed Zakaria in Time magazine, are “poised to retake the House and dominate post-election debates on the repeal of health-care reform.”

The author should be cited by name (as in the Zakaria example above) when you’re quoting from a by-lined article. When no author is noted, use the same rules but use the article’s title as a source:

Alcohol is a more dangerous drug than marijuana or even heroin, according to “The Biggest Killer: A Surprising Conclusion” in the October issue of American Health magazine.

The Star Tribune has misstated the documentation required for voting in Minnesota, according to David Brauer's Braublog on www.minnpost.com.

Specific volume and page citations are never needed. The name of articles is not absolutely vital to the attribution in the case of a website.

Do not use footnotes or endnotes. Your attribution, often stated informally, should appear within the text itself.

Quotation Exercise—Punctuate these sentences correctly.

1. “I have no intention of running for reelection” he replied

2. The chairman said that the proposed 2012 budget is “too risky for these difficult times”

3. “I do not object” he said “to the tone of this report”

4. Are you ready to be “a friend in need”

5. She replied that “I've always agreed with Cyndi Lauper that ‘girls just wanna have fun’”

6. Lauper claimed that young women “just wanna have fun”

7. “How wonderful” he exclaimed “that the November forecast is for dry weather”

8. “I'll answer you” she emphasized ”but only if you ask nicely”

9. He asked what the score was

10. According to the website WWW.PHOTO.COM, photographers can profit from setting up online storefronts.