

To Quote or Not to Quote

In the business world, quotation marks are sometimes used haphazardly. Here is a quick review of the rules governing correct use of quotation marks.

Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotations.

"Honesty," said the president, "is the best policy."

Do not use quotation marks for paraphrased remarks. These remarks are often introduced by *that*.

The president said that honesty is always the best policy.

Use quotation marks to enclose short expressions such as slang, jargon, nicknames, words used in a special sense for humor or irony, and words following *stamped* or *marked*.

Josh was called a "pizza pirate" because he refused to chip in for the delivery. [Slang]

A great fear in business is having your business or service "commoditized." [Jargon]

Frank Sinatra was also known as "Ol' Blue Eyes." [Nickname]

The former CEO could not find a job because she was "overqualified." [Irony]

The box was stamped "Fragile." [Words following "stamped"]

Use quotation marks or italics for words being defined or used as nouns.

The expression *de facto* means "in practice but not necessarily recognized." [Italics for word being defined and quotation marks for definition]

One of the most frequently misspelled words is *calendar*. [Word being used as a noun within the sentence]

Do not use quotation marks haphazardly.

When you arrive, go to the Customer Service Department. [Do not use quotation marks around a destination or name of a unit within an organization.]

You are cordially invited to our exciting spring sale. [Do not put quotation marks around *spring* or any word to give it special emphasis.]

Try your skill by placing quotation marks or italics where you think they belong in the following sentences. Remove any quotation marks incorrectly used, and write "Correct" if the sentence is properly punctuated. You may use underscoring to indicate italics.

1. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, I have a dream.
2. Albert Einstein said that the true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.
3. Verbing is defined as the process of turning a noun into a verb.
4. All of the mailing cases were marked Glass—Handle With Care.
5. Our annual "Fall Extravaganza" is the biggest and best sale in the region!
6. His presidential address was marred by many uhms and ahs.

7. Businesspeople often use the term best practices to mean the most effective techniques in a field or an industry.
8. Senior executives want anything brought to their attention to be "high level"; that is, they want it neatly summarized and free of technical terms.
9. Rock star Sting got his nickname from wearing yellow-and-black jerseys that other musicians thought made him look like a wasp.
10. Happiness, said comedian George Burns, is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city.
11. During the summer extensive changes will be made to the "Human Resources Department."
12. The word secretary has a long and honorable history, but many office professionals now use other titles.
13. The expression cook the books is not what we want to hear when a government investigation begins.
14. Did the manager say that she wanted me to merge documents with our database list?
15. Our copyeditor Angela said that she would scream if she saw another report with the expression "at this point in time."