

## LEARNING ABOUT QUOTATION MARKS

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### ***What are quotation marks?***

Let's check out Billy's latest disaster.

***What have you done, Billy?***

***I was just walking by when Mary-Jane's milk fell on me.***

***How?***

***I dunno.***

***What happened, Mary-Jane?***

***Billy was skating by, and lost control. He landed on me, and upset my drink.***

***Did you apologise?***

***But it was her fault, Miss.***

***Pic of Billy and teacher and Mary-Jane (each talking balloon is animated)***

So far, so good. It all makes sense. But how to show this conversation in writing?

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We need quotation marks – often known as 'talking marks'.

***'What have you done, Billy?' said the teacher.***

***'I was just walking by when Mary-Jane's milk fell on me, ' replied Billy.***

***'How? '***

***'I dunno, ' he mumbled.***

***'What happened, Mary-Jane?' she asked.***

***'Billy was skating by, and lost control,' she sobbed. 'He landed on me, and upset my drink. '***

***'Did you apologise? ' The teacher looked sternly at Billy.***

***'But it was her fault, Miss.'***

***Representative pic of conversation, with conversation (in quotes) to one side***

The quotation (or talking) marks indicate the beginning and end of each speech. They enclose *the actual words* used by the speakers.

HINT: The extra words added (said the teacher, she asked, etc) are to clear up any confusion about who might be talking. Sometimes when there are just two speakers, writers make it clear who is speaking in the first couple of lines, and then just leave out the 'he said' or 'she said' (knowing you will guess that it is first one speaker, then the other, repeatedly).

**What sorts of quotation marks are there?**

There are two types: **opening** and **closing** marks.

Immediately before the first word of speech there is an **opening quote mark**:

'I dunno... or "I dunno...

Immediately after the last word of speech there is a **closing quote mark**:

'I dunno,' he mumbled. or "I dunno," he mumbled.

RULE: Each quote (the exact words a person has said) *must end* in some sort of punctuation mark, and this always goes **before the final quote mark**.

Hint: The single closing quotation mark looks very like an apostrophe. It isn't! It has nothing to do with contractions or possession (see unit on apostrophes for details).

**What about single or double quotes?**

You will have seen single quotation marks in books. Like this:

***'What have you done, Billy?' said the teacher.***  
***'I was just walking by when Mary-Jane's milk fell on me,' replied***  
***Billy.***  
***'How?'***  
***'I dunno,' he mumbled.***

And you will have seen double quotation marks. Like this:

***"What have you done, Billy?" said the teacher.***  
***"I was just walking by when Mary-Jane's milk fell on me," replied***  
***Billy.***  
***"How?"***  
***"I dunno," he mumbled.***

RULE: It doesn't really matter if you use one **or** two quotation marks (they mean the same thing), but having started with one type (eg single quotes) you must continue to use single quotes. You must **never** change from single to double (or vice versa) half way through a piece of writing.

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### ***What about quotes and sentences?***

The only really complicated thing about quotation marks is how you deal with the relationship between quotes and their 'host' sentences. Here's an example:

***'I dunno, ' he mumbled.***

***Pic: I dunno as a talking balloon, with tail, coming out of Billy's mouth – he mumbled to one side***

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There are two parts to this sentence

A                      B

**THE QUOTE + Follow on statement (the rest of the sentence)**

They have to be treated differently.

**THE QUOTE needs**

**Opening and closing marks, plus another mark to show the end of the quote**

“ I dunno , ”

*(Annotated)*

**Follow on statement, which must end in a full stop.**

he mumbled.

So when they are combined, you get

A                      B

“ I dunno , ”                      +                      he mumbled.

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The quote can be *anywhere* in the sentence, as long as you stick to the rules.

***The teacher said, 'What have you done, Billy?'***

***'Billy,' said the teacher, 'what have you done?'***

***'What,' the teacher said, 'have you done?'***

***Pic of the teacher***

HINT: The important thing is to make it absolutely clear *which words* are spoken aloud.

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Let's look at three last examples.

**Example 1**

***'I was just walking by when Mary-Jane's milk fell on me, ' replied Billy.***

Here the sentence ends after *Billy*. That is where the full stop goes. However there must also be some sort of punctuation mark after the end of the quote itself (*me*) – because that's the rule. So we have a comma to end the quote (a comma, *not* a full stop, because the sentence keeps going beyond *me*), and a full stop to end the actual sentence.

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**Example 2**

***'What happened, Mary-Jane?' she asked.***

Here the sentence ends after *asked*. That is where the full stop goes. However there must also be a punctuation mark after *Mary-Jane* (the end of the actual quote) – because that's the rule. So we have a question mark to end the quote (because it's a question), and a full stop to end the sentence.

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**Example 3**

***'But it was her fault, Miss.'***

Here there is nothing after *Miss* (the writer assumes you know by now who is speaking). The word *Miss* is therefore the end of the quote **and** also the end of the sentence. Because *Miss* and its accompanying full stop is part of the quote – it goes *inside* the quote (so the final quote mark is the end of the sentence).