

Illogical Punctuation (Or, Punctuating Quotations)

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The Basic Rule

Put only directly quoted material between quotation marks. (This material can include marks of punctuation if they are part of what is being quoted.)

- Kenneth Clarke argues, “To be naked is simply to be without clothes”; John Berger counters, “The nude is always conventionalized”.
- John Berger asks, “What is this ‘seduction’ he writes of?”

The Exception (in the US only)

If a comma or period comes directly after a quotation, you must place it inside the closing quotation mark.

- Kenneth Clarke argues, “To be naked is simply to be without clothes”; John Berger counters, “The nude is always conventionalized.”
- Berger argues that this “seduction” is “nothing less than the paintings working upon us.”

NB: This rule does not apply to any other mark of punctuation (; : — ? !), even in the US. Place all of those outside the closing quotation mark.

The Exception to the US Exception

If a page citation follows a quotation, you must place it *between* the second quotation mark and the closing comma or period.

- Kenneth Clarke argues, “To be naked is simply to be without clothes”; John Berger counters, “The nude is always conventionalized” (47).
- Berger argues that this “seduction” is “nothing less than the paintings working upon us” (14).

Your Options

- Ask your teacher. If they tell you to follow MLA or Chicago style, or the style found in a US publication like the *New Yorker* or the *New York Times*, then put commas and periods inside closing quotation marks.
- Be consistent. If your teacher or editor allows you to choose a style of quotation, pick one, logical or not, and follow that.