

# tipsheet

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## Quotations and Parentheses

"Say what you mean and mean what you say." – *Anonymous*

In today's organizations, getting to the point quickly in your communication is imperative. However, your points must also be substantive and credible. Good use of quotations and parenthetical information in business communication helps establish credibility and facilitates reader understanding. When is it appropriate to use quotations and parenthetical information?

Answer - when they *add value* to your discussion.

### **QUOTATIONS - Use quotations to *enhance* your discussion and support your key points.**

Much of your business writing requires you to come to a specific conclusion, take a position, or make a recommendation. Quotations provide a way to support these types of assertions.

Quotations help you:

1. Discuss specific arguments or ideas.
2. Add emphasis to the position you have taken in your discussion.
3. Bring life to your words with more vivid, "well put" language.

Use quotations sparingly and at strategic points in your communication to ensure that the bulk of your words are your own and to heighten the impact of each quotation.

### Punctuation – In or Out of Quotation Marks?

Most, when in doubt, assume that punctuation marks always appear within quotations. However, the easy answer to this query is, "It depends."

#### **Keep periods and commas within quotation marks.**

*Example*

Land Rover North America CEO, Charles Hughes, challenges his constituents to be faithful to its core values of "authenticity, adventure, guts and supremacy," while engineering new vehicles that will drive the company's "bold, future direction."

Here, both the comma and the period are enclosed within quotations. However, there are some exceptions to this rule. If you use a parenthetical citation (i.e., Cameron 234), place a period after the parenthetical reference, rather than within the quotation marks.

#### **Place all other punctuation marks ( ; : ! ? ) outside of quotation marks, unless the punctuation is a part of the quoted reference.**

*Example(s)*

Are we to assume he was correct in saying, "Chivalry is dead"?

A wise man once questioned, "Is chivalry dead?"

Be sure to identify the context and tone of the quotation and determine where to place the marks accordingly.

### **PARENTHETICAL INFORMATION - Use parenthetical information to *explain* and provide detail that is non-essential to your statement's basic meaning.**

The information placed in parentheses could be left out of a sentence without affecting the overall sense or meaning of that sentence. Words in parentheses provide detail that explains and familiarizes the reader more with the topic.

In business, you will have to address different audiences with varying levels of exposure to your subject matter. You should keep this fact in mind when determining when to use parentheses

*Example*

Several different colors, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, combine to form white light.

Several different colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple) combine to form white light.

In the first example, the writer requires everyone to read each word in the sentence, regardless of how familiar some readers are with the concept of light. The second example gives the reader the option to get more detail if necessary by referring to the words within the parentheses.

Avoid using parentheses around an important thought that the audience *must* read to appreciate your argument. It may cause them to skip the parenthetical information and miss your point.

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