Terminal Punctuation

Ends of Sentences

In academic writing, sentences end with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark. Only in less formal writing is a dash or an ellipsis acceptable to end a sentence.

With Parentheses

When a whole sentence is in parentheses, the terminal punctuation remains within the parentheses.

- *I came. (I saw.) I conquered.*

When only the last part of the sentence in is parentheses, put the terminal punctuation outside the parentheses.

- *"I conquered", said Caesar (but he said it in Latin).*

With Quotation Marks

NB what follows is North American not British usage.

1. Periods and commas ALWAYS belong inside quotation marks.

- *A good editor's motto is "Be careful."*
- *"Be careful," is the motto of a good editor.*

2. Semi-colons and colons ALWAYS belong outside quotation marks.

- *"Be careful": these words should be pinned above every editor's desk.*
- *"Be careful"; the editor mutters this motto under her breath.*

3. Exclamation points, question marks, and dashes belong inside quotation marks when they are part of a quotation; they go outside the quotation marks when they are part of the sentence that frames the quotation.

- *The editor shouted "Be careful!"*
- *Have you heard the editor's motto "Be careful"?*

With Parenthetical Citations

Follow the relevant style guide. A documentation system which uses parenthetical references has its own rules about punctuation with quotations and references. Check carefully when using quotation marks and parentheses.

E.G. **APA** puts the terminal punctuation after the second parenthesis of the reference. **MLA** puts the terminal punctuation after the second parenthesis of a reference for a short quotation or paraphrase; a long indented quotation has its terminal punctuation before the parenthetical reference.

- *A sense of diminishment still attends women in the profession (Gubar 12).*   [APA and MLA short quotation]
- *..... attends women in the profession. (Gubar12)*   [MLA long quotation]