

Quotations and Brackets

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Quotation marks and Brackets have only a few specific uses, but they are very important to the support of academic essays and are often used together for support. In fact, did you know that brackets are called brackets because of the resemblance to the same-named support structures used in building construction supports? (“Bracket”).

Quotation Marks

1. Quotations marks are often used for integrating exact words from other resources.

Many have wondered why teachers require the use of outside material in papers. The reason is most claims and topics must be backed up by research to build credibility and expertise as writers. In fact, experts in all fields will cite other experts to support points being made. One way to do this is by using quoted material, meaning exact words or phrases from research.

Example

Mark Twain’s daughter was fascinated by her father. In fact, “when she was just thirteen years old, Mark Twain’s eldest daughter, Susie, began writing a biography of her famous father”(Kerley and Fotheringham).

Example- Exact words with interruption

“Review chapter 5 tonight,” said Professor Null, “instead of watching Jersey Shore.”

Example- More than one sentence still retains quotations before and after exact words.

Professor Null said, “Review chapter 5 tonight instead of watching Jersey Shore. However, do stay up late to watch Breaking Bad.”

2. Quotation marks are used to define a term or word.

Example

The word *Jubilate* means “to show or feel joy.”

3. Quotation marks are used to give a common term as well.

Example

In *Breaking Bad*, a high school chemistry teacher begins to build an empire selling methamphetamines, or “Speed.”

4. Use single quotation marks around quotations within quotations.

Example

My friend told me, “Professor Martinez was frustrated with the class and said, ‘I’ve told you daily about the importance of using sources.’ Then she made the class take a quiz.”

Brackets: the top 3 most used forms

1. Brackets are used for clarification, supplemental information, and editorial notes within direct quotations.

You will often see brackets used in newspaper or magazine articles to add clarification.

Example 1

Confusing- The witness said, “He tried to outrun him.”

Who tried to outrun whom?

Clear- The witness said, “He [the suspect] tried to outrun him [the police officer].”

Similarly, if a quotation references an event that is unfamiliar, the writer could identify it with brackets.

Example 2

Confusing- “When President Obama came down here and called it a natural disaster at a town hall meeting, that flipped a switch for me,” says documentary filmmaker Harry Shearer.

Clear- “When President Obama came down here and called it [the post-Katrina flooding of New Orleans] a natural disaster at a town hall meeting, that flipped a switch for me,” says documentary filmmaker Harry Shearer.

2. Use brackets to include supplemental information a reader should know.

Example 1- When using nick names to give full names.

“Jamie told Nick [Nicholas Null] that he really needed to get a smart phone.”

Example 2- Give title or information

“Nick Null [an English teacher at multiple colleges] thinks Norco College has the best writing program.”

3. Use brackets to indicate errors or nonstandard text within a quote to show that it is original and not your error by using “[sic]”, which roughly means “thus it is” in Latin.

Using [sic] communicates to the reader that this mistake is not the result of a typo on your part.

Example

When she was just thirteen years old, Mark Twain’s eldest daughter, Susie, began writing a biography of her famous father. Susie explains, “He [Twain] always walks up and down the room while thinking and between each coarse [sic] at meals” (Kerley and Fotheringham).

Here, [sic] indicates that the original writer wrote “coarse,” not “course, which is the correct spelling in this context.

Other rarely used instances for brackets not in direct quotations

a. Brackets are used for direction in stage or scripts:

Example

NICK [running into a door and falling down]: Ouch!

b. Brackets are used for parenthetical remarks within other parenthesis:

Example

Steps for getting a perfect score on Star Craft (labeled 1-7 [pages 4a-4d] on the cheat sheet) must be followed sequence:

References

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