Quotation Marks

Purpose: They are used to separate dialogue or cited information from the rest of the text. The rules that follow are customarily used in the United States.

Rule 1:
- Use double quotations marks to set off a direct (word-for-word) quotation.

Correct: “When will you be here?” he asked.
Incorrect: He asked “when would I be there.”

Rule 2:
• Either quotation marks or italics are customary for titles: magazines, books, plays, films, songs, poems, article titles, chapter titles, etc.

Rule 3a:
• Periods and commas ALWAYS go inside quotation marks.

Examples:
• The sign said, “walk.” Then it said, “Don’t walk,” then, “Walk,” all within thirty seconds.
• He yelled, “Hurry up.”

Rule 3b:
• Use single quotation marks for quotations within quotations.

Example:
• He said, “Dan cried, ‘Do not treat me that way.’”

NOTE: The period goes inside both the single and double quotation marks.

Rule 4:
• As a courtesy, make sure there is visible space at the start or end of a quotation between adjacent single and double quotation marks. (Your word processing program may do this automatically.)

Not ample space: He said, “Dan cried, ‘Do not treat me that way.’”
Ample Space: He said, “Dan cried, ‘Do not treat me that way.’”

Rule 5a:
• Quotation marks are often used with technical terms, terms used in an unusual way, or other expressions that vary from standard usage.

Examples:
• It’s an oil-extraction method known as “fracking.”
• He did some “experimenting” in his college days.
• I had a visit from my “friend” the tax man.

Rule 5b:
• Never use single quotation marks in sentences like the previous three.

Incorrect: I had a visit from my ‘friend’ the tax man.
Rule 6:

- When quoted material runs more than one paragraph, start each new paragraph with opening quotation marks, but do not use closing quotation until the end of the passage.

Example:

- She wrote: “I don’t paint anymore. For a while I thought it was just a phase that I would get over. It was supposed to be a distraction from him, from school, from work; the whole world. Until she walked into my life and showed me the true art behind painting. “Now that she is gone too, I don’t even try anymore.”

Resource:
The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation by Jane Straus