

# Punctuating Speech

A large, bold, black graphic of a pair of double quotation marks (‘ ’) centered on a white rectangular background.

## The Rules

# Different Names

Inverted commas can also be called:

Speech marks

Quotation marks



# Inverted Commas

There are two places where inverted commas are needed when writing direct speech:

“What’s the matter, Dina?” said Sid.

Inverted Commas

Inverted Commas

You need to **open** your inverted commas with a “ (66) before the first word which is being spoken.

You need to **close** your inverted commas with a ” (99) after the last word **which is being spoken**.

Imagine that inverted commas are like hands;  
They hold within them **only** the words which are being spoken.



“What’s the matter, Dina?”



said Sid.

# Punctuation

There are two places where other forms of punctuation are needed when writing direct speech:

“What’s the matter, Dina?” said Sid.

You need to end the speaking with:

- a comma
- a question mark, if it is a question.
- an exclamation mark, if it is an exclamation.

You will need to finish your sentence with a full stop after the reporting clause (the part which shows who is speaking).

Examples of other punctuation in direct speech are:

“How exciting it is!” exclaimed Sarah.

“I don’t know what to do,” said Sayeed.

# Reporting Clauses

After the speech itself, a reporting clause gives a little bit of information about **who is speaking** and **how it was said**.

“What’s the matter, Dina?” **said Sid**.

Reporting Clause

In this case, Sid is speaking.

If Sid said it in a different way, you could change ‘said’ to...



“What’s the matter, Dina?” **asked Sid**.

“What’s the matter, Dina?” **whispered Sid**.

“What’s the matter, Dina?” **uttered Sid**.

“What’s the matter, Dina?” **shouted Sid**.

# Discussion Task 1

Here is a conversation between Mr. Miller and Max.  
How would this look if it were written as direct speech using inverted commas and the correct punctuation?

Where more than one person is talking, remember to start a new line for each new speaker.

Mr Miller



Please could you take those to Jessica's classroom?

Max

No problem, sir.



# Discussion Task 1 - ANSWER

“Please could you take those to Jessica’s classroom?”  
asked Mr Miller.

“No problem, sir,” replied Max.



It does not matter if you used said, asked, exclaimed or any other reporting verb – just don’t forget to mix it up a bit in your work. The same reporting verb too many times can get boring.

# Discussion Task 2

Here is a conversation between three friends.  
How would this look if it were written as direct speech using inverted commas and the correct punctuation?

Remember: new speaker, new line!

What are your plans for tonight?



Lisa

I don't really have any.



Janine

Do you fancy going out for a meal?



Alex



# Discussion Task 2 - ANSWER

“What are your plans for tonight?” asked Lisa.

“I don’t really have any,” replied Janine.

“Do you fancy going out for a meal?” said Alex.



Remember: new speaker, new line!

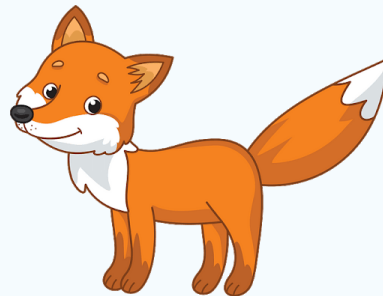
# Discussion Task 3 – Spot The Missing Speech Marks

The three sentences below all contain direct speech, but the inverted commas are missing. Can you tell your partner where they should be?

What's for dinner? Lucy asked her Dad.

The mouse looked at the fox and quivered, Please don't eat me.

Goal! shouted the boy as the ball went in the back of the net.



# Discussion Task 3 – Spot The Missing Speech Marks

## ANSWERS

“What’s for dinner?” Lucy asked her Dad.

The mouse looked at the fox and quivered, “Please don’t eat me.”

“ Goal!” shouted the boy as the ball went in the back of the net.



# Discussion Task 4 – Correctly Punctuate the Speech

Below are all examples of incorrectly punctuated speech.  
Tell your partner why they are wrong and how you would correct them.

“Who goes there” grumbled the troll.

“What a beautiful day it is! rejoiced Sheila.”

“That’s all the money I have, explained Frank sadly.



# Discussion Task 4 – Correctly Punctuate the Speech

## ANSWERS

“Who goes there?” grumbled the troll.

“What a beautiful day it is!” rejoiced Sheila.

“That’s all the money I have,” explained Frank sadly.

