

"Did you say something?"

Dialogue Rules

A little practice goes a long way.

Well, that, and keeping this cheat sheet nearby.

Use quotes to signify a conversation is happening. The conversation is called the dialogue. The "he said/she said" is called the tagline.

Shelly yawned, "Is it already time to get up?"

"Yes, dear, and your breakfast is ready," said her mother.

The tagline is set off by a comma before the dialogue begins. Notice that the quotation marks are the first and last thing around the person's spoken words or thoughts. Even the punctuation of her words is included inside the quotation mark.

The only time a period ends a quoted sentence is when there are multiple sentences or the quote is at the end of the sentence. The comma is still separating the dialogue from the tagline in the first example below, but it stays inside the quotation marks just like a question mark, exclamation point, or period would.

"Something smells delicious. I hope mom made chocolate chip pancakes," Shelly thought to herself.

Just then, her mom yelled up the stairs, "And, you'll be happy to know that I made your favorite pancakes this morning."

Use commas when the tagline interrupts the dialogue.

"Mom! You're the best," exclaimed Shelly, "and so are these pancakes!"