USING AND PUNCTUATING QUOTATION MARKS

• Direct quotations usually begin with a capital letter, unless you are continuing a sentence with quoted words:

The film critic made a final pronouncement: “This movie is a waste of time.”

The film critic called the movie “nothing but a waste of time.”

• commas and period are placed inside quotation marks
• semi-colons and colons are placed outside quotation marks
• question marks and exclamation points are placed inside quotation marks if the quotation is a question or exclamation; otherwise, they are placed ouside:

The film critic asked, “Why did you waste your time on this movie?”

Did the film critic say, “This movie is a waste of time”?

• When a quotation is interrupted by a “speaking tag,” you must punctuate according to independent clauses:

“This movie is a waste of time,” said the film critic. “Stay at home!”
Independent Clause Ind. Clause

“Since this movie is such a waste of time,” advised the critic,” you should stay home”
Dependent Clause Ind. Clause

(The first part of the quote is dependent upon the second part, hence the use of a comma instead of a period)

* quotations within quotations use single quotes (‘) as opposed to double quotes (“).