

## Punctuation and attribution of direct quotes

**EXAMPLE #1:** A direct quote made up of one complete sentence.

- A. Attribution is at the end of the quote.
- B. Punctuation goes **inside** the quote mark.

**Incorrect:**

- The secretary said, “I can’t find the missing records.”
- The coach said, “Where is the new tennis racket?”

**Correct:**

- “I can’t find the missing records,” the secretary said.
- “Where is the new tennis racket?” the coach said.

**EXAMPLE #2:** A direct quote of two or more complete sentences.

A. Attribution is placed after the first complete sentence. **Why?** Because readers scan. Subconsciously, a reader will start to look for the name of the speaker as soon as the reader sees a quote mark. In a quote of multiple sentences, if you delay providing the name, a reader will read down to the name without paying attention to the quote. Most often, the reader will not go back and re-read.

B. **Remember:** A period follows the attribution — not a comma. And attribution is **not** re-stated anywhere within the multiple-sentence direct quote.

**Incorrect:**

- “There will be no school on Tuesday. The boiler broke, and we cannot provide heat,” the principal said.
- “The same result is expected on this test. Most of the students will pass,” the teacher said. “We will have a good showing. We always do,” the teacher said.

**Correct:**

- “There will be no school on Tuesday,” the principal said. “The boiler broke, and we cannot provide heat.”
- “The same result is expected on this test,” the teacher said. “Most of the students will pass. We will have a good showing. We always do.”

**EXAMPLE #3:** Continuing a direct quote into a new paragraph.

- A. No close quotes at the end of the opening paragraph.
- B. Open quote at the beginning of the new paragraph.
- C. Do not re-state attribution in subsequent paragraphs.

**Correct:**

“The approved budget meets the city’s needs,” the mayor said. “It takes into account rising costs for services. It cleans up old debts that were expensive to carry. It relieves the pressure on the understaffed police department.

“I don’t know how we could have done better. It’s a very good budget.”

### USE NEUTRAL ATTRIBUTION WORDS.

For most quotations, the best word to use is “said.” When quoting documents, you might say “according to.”

**WHY?** News reporting is supposed to be objective, and these words are neutral. Provide color and nuance by giving details, not by using attribution words that subtly hint that you agree with, disagree with, believe or don’t believe what a person said.