

Exclamation Marks

APSU Writing Center Handout

An exclamation mark shows strong emotion, such as excitement, urgency, surprise, or enthusiasm.

You will not use exclamation marks often in academic writing.

However, they may appear in reflections, speeches, creative writing and direct quotations that include strong emotion.

How Exclamation Marks Are Used

Use an exclamation mark to emphasize strong feeling or urgency.

Overusing them can make your writing sound overly dramatic or less professional.

- **Example:** You scheduled your first Writing Center appointment!
- **Example:** Yes! I finally understood the thesis statement rule.
- **Example:** I couldn't believe he said, "I forgot the assignment"!

Question Marks (?)

A question mark is used at the end of a direct question.

In academic writing, question marks are often used in research questions, reflective writing, and direct quotations that ask a question.

When to use Question Marks

Use a question mark at the end of a direct question, at the end of a quoted question, and in sentences that directly ask or reflect on something.

Question Marks & Quotes

If the quotation itself:

is a question, place the question mark inside the quotation marks.

is not a question, but the entire sentence is, place the question mark outside the quotation marks.

- **Example:** What's the best way to cite a source in APA?
- **Example:** She asked, "When is your appointment with the writing tutor?"
- **Example:** They asked, "How do I cite this?" before moving on to the next slide.

Extra Practice

Add the correct punctuation mark (? or !) at the end of each sentence or quote.

- When does the Writing Center close
- I finally finished my 10-page research paper
- The tutor asked, "Did you bring your outline"
- Make sure you submit your paper before 11:59 p.m

Answers

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References

- California State University, Chico, Student Learning Center. (2020). How to punctuate quotations. https://www.csuchico.edu/slc/_assets/documents/writing-center-handouts/quotation-marks-handout.pdf
- Panelli, M. (2011). *End punctuation* (2014). San José State University Writing Center. <https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/End%20Punctuation.pdf>
- University of Arizona Global Campus Writing Center. (2025). *Exclamation marks*. <https://writingcenter.uagc.edu/exclamation-marks>