

# POLISH UP YOUR PUNCTUATION

## Help sheet six: direct speech and speech marks.

### RULES

1. **“Direct speech” describes words that are spoken.**

2. **You put spoken words between speech marks** (sometimes called quotation marks). For example: “Stop pulling my hair,” Ahmed yelled.

- The speech marks that go at the beginning of spoken words are sometimes called sixty-sixes because they look like this figure: 66.
- The speech marks that go at the end are sometimes called ninety-nines: 99.

3. **The first spoken word starts with a capital letter, even if it is not at the beginning of a sentence.** For example: she gasped, **Y**ou are the most beautiful frog in the world.”

4. **The spoken words are separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma, which is placed:**

- **Before, if the spoken words are not at the beginning of the sentence.** For example: the cat stretched itself with a sarcastic smile, “Bet you didn’t think I could talk!”
- **After, if the spoken words do not end with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.** For example: “A cat talking, I must be dreaming,” the caretaker gasped.

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**5. Begin a new paragraph every time there is a new speaker.** For example: "You're not dreaming," said the cat as it jumped up onto the table.

"I've had too much wine," the caretaker muttered.

"You're right," replied the cat. "You've had too much wine and haven't done enough work."

### **A. Write out these sentences, putting in the missing speech marks and capital letters:**

1. holy mackerel, Batman, said Robin.
2. elementary, my dear Watson, said Sherlock Holmes.
3. The presenter beamed at the Game Show contestants and asked, haven't we had a lorra, lorra laughs?
4. As the magician sawed his assistant in half he said to his audience, i'm sure you're wondering how I'm going to manage this - I am too!
5. The angry teacher shouted, every time I open my mouth, some idiot speaks.
6. The football commentator remarked, it's a game of two halves.
7. is Leonardo di Capricio good looking? I hadn't noticed, said Kate Winslet.
8. Juliet thought about her boyfriend and whispered to herself, oh why are you called Romeo?

### **B. Write out these sentences from Anita Desai's novel, *The Village by the Sea*, putting in the missing speech marks, capital letters and commas:**

1. how will we get jobs Hari asked, sitting up suddenly they will bring men from the cities to work in the factories
2. no, they won't all three boys shouted in protest

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3. they were silent for a minute, then one said how can they? City people won't come to live in a village. We live here - we can work in their factories.
4. we don't know how to Hari said
5. Anyone can work machines. They will show us - then we will do it
6. we don't know anything about machines Hari protested we only know how to fish and how to grow coconuts
7. we will learn they shouted
8. how can we? We haven't even finished school, we know nothing Hari said you have to go to college to learn engineering
9. college they scoffed college and school teach you nothing. Books don't teach you to work machines. We will learn in the factories
10. what factories are they? What will they make Hari asked, trying hard to be optimistic like them and stop feeling so worried and afraid

### **C. Copy out this conversation from Robert Swindell's novel, *The Ghost Messengers*, putting in the missing speech marks, capital letters, commas and new paragraphs:**

Mr Leacock Meg - what on earth are you doing here at this time of the morning I've got something to ask you, sir what - now couldn't it have waited till breacktime Meg shook her head no sir I - I think it's important well, all right then he tucked his briefcase under his arm the better to look at his watch let's make it a quickie though - I've a lesson to prepare she nodded I'll be quick sir what does hangup mean hangup he frowned it's an American expression, isn't it it means something that's a problem in your life - like if you hate to travel in lifts, they say you've got a hangup about lifts