Punctuating Direct Speech

Rule: **The direct speech and the reporting clause (the speaker and verb) must always be separated by punctuation marks – usually a comma, question mark or exclamation mark. A full stop is only used after the reporting clause when the direct speech is split between sentences.**

Where is the speaker?

Before the speech

There is always a comma after the speaker and verb.

The speech always starts with a capital letter.

Speech ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark inside the inverted commas.

After the speech

There is always a comma, question mark or exclamation mark after the speech but inside the inverted commas.

In the middle of the speech

There is always a comma, question mark or exclamation mark inside the inverted commas after the first part of speech.

If the speech is split in the middle of the speaker's sentence, use a comma after the speaker. Continue the speech in lower case.

If the speech is split at the end of a speaker's sentence, a full stop should be placed after the speaker. Continue the speech with a capital letter.

Grant whispered, "Don't let him hear you breathing. He's coming."

"Don't let him hear you breathing. He's coming," Grant whispered.

"Don't let him hear you breathing," Grant whispered. "He's coming."

"Don't," Grant whispered, "let him hear you breathing. He's coming."

Remember: New speaker = New paragraph