Answers to Quotation Questions: Punctuation, Quotes inside Quotes, and Altering Quotes

Should punctuation go inside or outside of quotation marks? Generally, periods and commas at the end of quotes go inside the quotation marks. However, when you have a parenthetical citation after the quote, the period goes after this citation, not inside the quotation marks.

For example:
No parenthetical citation: In her speech on Tuesday, Melinda said that “water rights will become extremely important.”

Parenthetical citation: Ecosystems “require stability over time” (Halsey, 2011, p. 2).

How do I use a quote that has another quote inside it? Use double quotation marks (“ ”) around the whole quote, and single quotation marks (‘ ’) around the quote within the quote.

For example:
Rodriquez (2013) stated that “the best books are the ones that ‘prickle the imagination,’ as Ursula LeGuin once said” (p. 89).

May I omit part of a quote? Yes! To omit part of a quote, use ellipses (...) to show where you omitted words from the quote. This is a great way to take out irrelevant parts of quotes. Make sure that your omission does not change the overall meaning of the quote.

For example:
Original quote: “Educational video games, like other educational toys, may benefit children by providing educational opportunities at home” (Lee, 2009, p. 14).

Quote with omission: “Educational video games...may benefit children by providing educational opportunities at home” (Lee, 2009, p. 14).

May I change a quotation? You may not significantly change a quotation, but you may add clarifying information to a quote using brackets ([ ]). Bracketed words can replace a confusing term in the sentence (option 1) or add extra words for clarification (option 2).

For example:
Original quote: “Bob asked Jorge about his family’s history.”
Option 1: “Bob asked [his grandfather] about his family’s history.”
Option 2: “Bob asked Jorge [his grandfather] about his family’s history.”