Dialogue Punctuation Practice: Printable Worksheet with Answer Key

Complete worked example / separate answer key

Punctuate: sam whispered the door is open

Answer: Sam whispered, "The door is open."

Reason: The speech tag Sam whispered comes first, so a comma follows whispered. The spoken words form a complete sentence, so a period sits inside the closing quotation mark. Quotation marks appear in one pair. Check: one comma after the tag, one period inside the closing quotation mark, two quotation marks total.

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Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

Punctuate: mia asked where is the library

Answer: Mia asked, "Where is the library?"

Reason: The speech tag Mia asked comes first, so a comma follows asked. The spoken words are a question, so the question mark sits inside the closing quotation mark. No period is added after the question mark.

Check: Count two quotation marks. Confirm one comma after asked. Confirm the question mark is inside the closing quotation mark and no comma follows it.

Task 2

Punctuate: i will finish the report tom said

Answer: "I will finish the report," Tom said.

Reason: The spoken sentence would end with a period, but a trailing speech tag follows, so the period becomes a comma inside the closing quotation mark. The outer sentence ends with a period after said.

Check: Confirm the comma is inside the closing quotation mark and the final period is outside. Count two quotation marks and one comma inside.

Task 3

Punctuate: we need more paper priya said and two pens

Answer: "We need more paper," Priya said, "and two pens."

Reason: The speech tag interrupts the dialogue. Use a comma inside the first closing quotation mark, a comma after said, and lowercase and because the second segment continues the sentence. The final period sits inside the last closing quotation mark.

Check: Count four quotation marks. Confirm commas inside the first closing quotation mark and after said. Confirm the second segment begins lowercase and the final period is inside.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Punctuate: ben shouted watch out

Answer: Ben shouted, "Watch out!"

Reason: The speech tag comes first, so a comma follows shouted. The spoken words are an exclamation, so the exclamation point sits inside the closing quotation mark. No period or comma is added after the exclamation point.

Check: Confirm one comma after shouted, one exclamation point inside the closing quotation mark, and two quotation marks total. Confirm no extra terminal mark follows.

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Worked example, Task 1, Task 2, Task 3, Task 4 / Dialogue Punctuation Answer Key

Separate answer key page with one primary rendering per item, a brief explanation, and acceptable variants where a consistent alternative convention is stated.

1. Mia asked,

Where is the library?

Reasoning: The speech tag Mia asked comes first, so a comma follows asked. The spoken words are a question, so the question mark sits inside the closing quotation mark. No period is added after the question mark. Check: Count two quotation marks. Confirm one comma after asked. Confirm the question mark is inside the closing quotation mark and no comma follows it.

2.

I will finish the report,

Tom said. Reasoning: The spoken sentence would end with a period, but a trailing speech tag follows, so the period becomes a comma inside the closing quotation mark. The outer sentence ends with a period after said. Check: Confirm the comma is inside the closing quotation mark and the final period is outside. Count two quotation marks and one comma inside.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Quotation marks: all spoken words enclosed in paired quotation marks; no quotation marks around indirect speech.
- [ ] Commas with speech tags: comma after a leading tag and inside the closing quotation mark before a trailing tag; no comma after a question mark or exclamation point.
- [ ] Terminal punctuation: period, question mark, or exclamation point placed inside the closing quotation mark when it belongs to the spoken sentence.
- [ ] Paragraphing: new speaker begins a new paragraph.
- [ ] Consistency: if an alternative convention such as single quotation marks is used, it is stated and applied consistently.

Reflection: What did you check, what did you change, and what will you try next?