

## Using the Question Mark

Question marks end all direct questions. This includes incomplete questions and statements intended as questions.

Direct question: What is your name?

Incomplete question: Really? When? No kidding?

Statement intended as a question: Your name is Catherine?

Sentences which *describe* a question but do not directly *ask* a question, are called **indirect questions**. They do not need a question mark.

Incorrect: He asked if he could leave early?  
(Describes but does not ask a question)

Correct: He asked if he could leave early.

Correct: He asked, "May I leave early?"  
(In this example the question is quoted directly)

Use a **question mark in parentheses** after a point of fact, to indicate any uncertainty about it. Use this sparingly and only for items that are impossible to verify.

Example: His great-great-grandfather (Charles Cavendish?) supposedly fought in the Peninsula.

Example: Chaucer was born in 1343 (?).  
(Note that a question mark used this way is not an end mark. A full stop is still needed.)

## Question Marks or Exclamation Marks in Quotations

If a **question** or **exclamation** is quoted directly, the quotation should contain the question mark or exclamation mark.

If the question or exclamation is at the end of the quotation, the question mark or exclamation point should come before the closing quotation mark.

Incorrect: "Look at that"! he exclaimed. "Did you see that"?

Correct: "Look at that!" he exclaimed. "Did you see that?"  
(the question mark or exclamation mark comes before the closing quotation mark.)

A question mark can be found outside the quotation mark if the sentence is asking about a quotation, but the quotation itself is not a question.

Incorrect: Did Mark Antony say, "Friends, Romans, countrymen?"  
(A question is not being quoted. The speaker is asking about a quotation.)

Correct: Did Mark Antony say, "Friends, Romans, countrymen"?

In the rare case where the question is about a quotation that ends in a question, the sentence should end with a single question mark before the closing quotation mark.

Incorrect: Who said, "*Et tu, Brute?*"?  
(The second question mark is redundant)

Correct: Who said, "*Et tu, Brute?*"