

Journalism Style

Punctuating Composition Titles

Each time you refer to a composition—something a person wrote, programmed, filmed or created artistically—you need to indicate to your audience that it is a composition. This is frequently done by putting the composition's title within quotation marks and capitalizing the important words. Some composition titles require additional punctuation or, when used in a headline, double quotation marks should be replaced with single quotation marks.

More Quotation Practice

Which of these are composition titles that require quotation marks?

1. The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (the book)
2. Messiah (oratorio—music)
3. Hammond Historical World Atlas
4. Yellow Submarine (song)
5. Law and Order (TV show)
6. Hard Rock Cafe (restaurant)
7. Apocrypha (sacred work)
8. Richard Cory (poem)
9. Deutsch Aktuell 2 (textbook)
10. Times-Picayune (newspaper)

Composition Titles and Other Punctuation

Some composition titles contain punctuation. If a punctuation mark is part of the title, include it inside the quotation marks. *I love the 1923 movie "Safety Last!"* in which its bespectacled star Harold Lloyd dangles from a building, high above the street, holding on only to the hand of a giant clock.

If a composition title appears inside of quoted material, use single quotation marks around the title of composition. "My favorite book is 'Of Mice and Men,'" Titus said.

When you write headlines, replace quotation marks with single quotation marks.

Publisher to release 'Mockingbird Sequel'

Try It!

Copyedit the following sentences for capitalization and for the punctuation of composition titles.



By Harold Lloyd and Wesley Stout, via Wikimedia Commons

1. Please hand me the ap stylebook and show me how to open indesign on this computer.
2. Of course newsweek ranked duke ahead of harvard in its most recent survey of colleges.
3. I read the reviews in the oregonian, but I still think the austin american statesman was right about both shakespeare's julius caesar and grand theft auto 23.
4. The fall play will be the crucible, while the drama department will produce arsenic and old lace in the spring.
5. The title of my essay is why I am a hunchback.
6. I wrote it because my english textbook, holt literature and language arts, weighs four pounds, my algebra text weighs more than three pounds and deutsh heute is almost three pounds.
7. The television show doctor who inspired the novel timewyrm: genesys. (The name of the show was doctor who.)
8. I just loved seeing you in Oklahoma! and in Phantom of the Opera!
9. "I just loved seeing you in Oklahoma! and in Phantom of the Opera!" she gushed.
10. Copy edit this headline: *The Beatles Abbey Road to be reissued.*