QUOTATION MARKS WITH “QUOTE-UNQUOTE”

BAD GRAMMAR/GOOD PUNCTUATION

QUOTES.13: When the word quote or unquote is said, put in the words as said and surround them with commas. Also, use the quotation marks.

He was, quote/unquote, "too tired" to go with us.
She said, quote, "Get out." Those were her exact words.
He is a, quote, "nerd," end quote, of the first order.

DISCUSSION

There is never a time that appropriate punctuation is omitted because of a word or words said, and the words quote and unquote are no exceptions. We do not omit the quote marks just because the words are said.

Quote/unquote, said together, have a slash mark between them.
He describes it as "flying high," unquote.
She said, quote/unquote, "You are fired."
I told him that he is, quote, "incorrigible," end quote.

MORSON’S

RULE 105

When a speaker introduces a passage and punctuates aloud with quote, open quote, quote/unquote, open/close quote, unquote, or end quote, the reporter must decide if the context requires the actual marks or the actual words. For those who would say all the words must appear as is, the first set of examples would apply.

EXAMPLES

a. I will read the relevant line, quote: I saw him when he was serious; I saw him when he was hilarious. I didn’t like him either way, end quote.

b. She was, quote, crazy as a bedbug, unquote.

c. He was, quote/unquote, just plain crazy. (See Rule 276 for the use of the slant.)

d. You are right about the first section that you cried; however, quote, Failure of the hospital to provide such statement shall constitute a valid defense, unquote.

NOTE

The words that take the place of punctuation (quote, open quote, unquote) are set off with commas; the first word of a fragment that follows these words is not capitalized, but the first word of a complete sentence is.
EXAMPLES

e. I will read the relevant line: “I saw him when he was serious; I saw him when he was hilarious. I didn’t like him either way.

f. You are right about the first section that you cited; however, “Failure of the hospital to provide such statement shall constitute a valid defense.”

In any event, do not use both the words and the punctuation.

DICTIONARIES & ONLINE

http://www.wordreference.com/definition/quote-unquote

quote-unquote interj

an expression used before or part before and part after a quotation to identify it as such, and sometimes to dissociate the writer or speaker from it

http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/quoteunquote

quote-unquote
Definitions
exclamation

an expression used before or part before and part after a quotation to identify it as such, and sometimes to dissociate the writer or speaker from it

Example Sentences Including 'quote-unquote'
"I have never seen a race with so many quote-unquote credible candidates.

So America didn't get it, it wasn't quote-unquote successful.
Misc (1999)

http://onelook.com/?w=quote-unquote&ls=a

General (2 matching dictionaries)

1. quote-unquote, quote-unquote: Collins English Dictionary [home, info]
2. quote-unquote: Wordnik [home, info]
> What is the proper usage of "quote unquote," as in "Bob told me he's quote unquote semi-retired?" I would imagine it's "...quote semi-retired unquote," although I almost never hear it used that way. The first usage seems a lot more popular.

Sure does. There's a reason, of course. As you surmise, the two ways of making verbal quotes are identical in intent, and in fact identical with the gesture of drawing "quotes" in the air with one's index and middle fingers (the "V" fingers) on both hands. This may be just an American gesture, but I suspect it's common enough. This is often accompanied by an "ironic" intonation on the item that is to be "quoted" in any of these usages.

The pragmatic sense is to bracket the item in question in exactly the same way philosophers do with what they call "scare quotes", that is, a warning that the writer does not take responsibility for the correctness of any description, thus effectively saying the writer believes something like the reverse of the description.

But this is a convention of written language. What you describe is one way that spoken English can also avail itself of that convention. It can provide "quotes" by saying quote. Rather like Lisp. Cool.

Now what about the unquote? If you have a lengthy quotation, you need to know where both ends are. So we say unquote at the end (incidentally making spoken English more like printing -- where the beginning and ending quotation marks are different -- than like ASCII, where they're identical). Lisp doesn't need to mark the end of the quote; this is where all those parentheses come in handy. Also cool.

However, if you are doing scare quotes in speech, and thereby taking your chances with the listener's short-term memory, chances are you're targeting only one word or phrase -- one phonological unit in any case -- and you don't really need to mark the end; it's obvious. All you really need is a marker at the beginning to warn your parter to listen ironically.

So "quote-unquote" becomes a compound prefixal particle, and you don't have to worry about the other shoe falling. Much the same fate overtook the as far as ... is concerned/goes constructions, and the so [Adjective] that ... construction. The last parts of these are simply dropped in many cases. And I've heard people say just "quote" (without the "-unquote") in this usage, as well as the doublet.

As far as usage of the construction is concerned, I'd say it's gone too far to separate the two now. Besides, it sounds insufferably pedantic to insist on quote word unquote; and -- the clincher -- you would never write it, because you could use real quotes. So it's exclusively colloquial, and "proper" written usage is therefore irrelevant, because there isn't any.

That's why it sounds better. As Peter Schickele says (about music), if it sounds good, it is good.