

## THE USE OF STANDARD ENGLISH PUNCTUATION IN ALL COMMON CONTENT

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**Abstract:** *Punctuation is essential and is used to convey and clarify the meaning of written language. It is such simple marks as the full stop or the comma, and the more complex ones of semicolons and hyphens. Getting punctuation wrong can change the entire meaning of a sentence. In this article we will show you how important each punctuation.*

**Key words:** *dot, quotation mark, apostrophes, period, comma, apostrophe, quotation, question, exclamation, brackets, braces, parenthesis, dash, hyphen, ellipsis, colon, semicolon*

Punctuation is the tool that allows us to organize our thoughts and make it easier to review and share our ideas. The standard English punctuation is as follows: period, comma, apostrophe, quotation, question, exclamation, brackets, braces, parenthesis, dash, hyphen, ellipsis, colon, semicolon. Below is an explanation of some punctuation that is commonly misused.

Commas are primarily used to aid in clarity and to join two independent clauses with a conjunction. They set off introductory phrases and set off series. They also are used to separate independent and dependent clauses. The Oxford comma is the inclusion of a comma before coordinating conjunction in a series. Examples: I enjoyed the singers, and I loved the dancers. At the beginning of the performance, two dancers appeared from behind the curtain. Even though the auditorium was packed, the audience remained silent. I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.

Commas can also be used to note an interjection in a sentence. Example: The criminal said the judge was an idiot. The criminal, said the judge, was an idiot. The criminal is speaking in the first sentence. The judge is speaking in the second.

Apostrophes are used to mark possession and to mark contractions. They are also used to denote a quotation mark in material that is already being quoted. Examples: It was James car that the drunk driver hit. James said, if you come any closer, I'll call the police.

Quotation marks are used to inform a reader either of something that was spoken or something that is being directly copied from another work. Quotes should also be placed around a word if it is used in a specific context or

otherwise bears special attention. In informal applications, quotations can also be used to denote something that is ironic. Examples: Ludie said, Is this my prom dress? Dr. Shruti claims, the use of violence against women in India is on the rise.

Question and exclamation marks are used to note interrogative and exclamatory sentences. Neither of these punctuation marks are commonly used in academic writing. In general, a writer should not be shouting at the reader in formal writing. The lack of conversation makes any question rhetorical, and revising the question in a statement would be the better course.

Hyphens are most commonly used to pair compound words. Throw-away, high-speed-chase, merry-go-round, user-friendly

Dashes are generally not in common use but denote a tangent within a thought. There are two kinds of dashes, an “en” dash and an “em” dash. En dashes essentially are the same glyph as hyphens but fill a different purpose. Em dashes are longer, an easy way to remember is that an en dash is the length of an “n” and an Em dash is the length of an “m”. Example: I think that my dog is a genius — but doesn’t everybody think their pet is? Dashes are able to substitute for commas and semicolons in the right situation. They can replace commas to note non-essential information or semicolon to note an example. Despite, and because of this versatility dashes should not be frequently employed in your writing. The multitude of applications make dashes easy to overuse taking away from, rather than adding to clarity in your writing. Dashes can either connect to the surrounding words or be separated by a space, it is an issue of style, be sure to ask your professors if they have a preference.

Parenthesis note non-essential information that could be skipped without altering the meaning of a sentence. Brackets are most commonly employed in academic writing within a quotation where the writer is omitting or explaining something.

Braces are used quite rarely and are employed to essentially make a list within a list. Examples: Cora (the woman who lives down the street from Jane) works as a paralegal. Professor Brown claims, “She [the novel’s central character] is an example of a strong African-American woman.” Before I go on vacation, I need to pack my bags {clothes, toiletries and shoes}, unplug the TV, and close all of the windows.

Ellipsis marks the omission of a word or words. If the omission includes the end of a sentence the glyph has four dots (...) instead of three.

Colons make the statement: note what follows. Whatever information that follows the colon must, in some way, explain, prove, or describe what ever came before it. To properly employ a colon, ensure that the clause that follows the

mark is able to stand on its own (unless it is a list). Because whatever comes before the colon must be a complete sentence, your writing after the colon is not required to be. Example: The Bridge keeper asked me three questions: what is your name, what is your quest, what is your favorite color.

A semicolon can be used to join two related main clauses. Example: James Left a mess at his desk after he left work; Sarah had to clean it up. Another way to employ a semicolon to join two related main clauses is to include a conjunctive adverb such as: however, moreover, nevertheless, furthermore, consequently, or thus. Conjunctive adverbs can also be used with a comma. Example: James left a mess at his desk after he left work; consequently, Sarah had to clean it up. The simplest way to deal with two independent main clauses is to make two sentences. If the topic of the two sentences are not related, or if one or both of the sentences are already long, joining them could make the sentence too long and be a burden on the reader.

One of the most common applications of semicolons is as a substitute for commas in a list in which commas are required for the things listed.

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