

## ENGLISH

## PUNCTUATION

While the following rule for punctuation exhibit the best professional practice, there is much diversity in the use of certain of the marks, especially the comma. Many such differences are duly noted. The rules have been made as few, as concise, and as clear as possible. Some rules that are of service only rarely have been omitted.

In general; punctuation is more "open" than was formerly the case, that is, the points, especially the commas, being employed only where uniform custom demands them or where they are essential to clearness and precision. This style of punctuation is best suited to the more simple, direct forms of writing, such as plain narrative; but if carried to extremes it results in ambiguity and an appearance of slovenliness. The primary aim of punctuation is to convey to the reader the exact meaning intended, and any text should be punctuated more or less "closely," according as clearness demands.

The punctuation marks are: the period, or full stop (.), comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), exclamation mark (!), interrogation mark (?), dash (—), parentheses (), brackets ([ ]), quotation marks (" "), and apostrophe (').

## I. THE PERIOD, OR FULL STOP (.)

1. A period is used at the end of a sentence, or any expression standing for a sentence, that is neither interrogative nor exclamatory.
  - A. Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience dies with them.  
So much for Nestor.
2. A period is used after an abbreviation; also, before a decimal, and, therefore, between dollars and cents expressed in figures.
  - A. The MSS. were badly scorched. Mr. and Mrs. James Brown. James Brown, Esq., Bath, O. Dr. James Brown. David Livingstone, LL.D. (b. 1813; d. 1873). Maj. Gen. Wm. Prescott Scott. It measured 16.13 feet. The English pound sterling is worth about \$4.94.
  - B. Note. A few publishers omit the period after abbreviations Mr, Mrs, and Dr; as, Dr Brown.
3. A period is commonly used after Roman numerals in such expressions as Maxmillian I., George III., 2 Sam. xxii: 3, etc. This was formerly the universal practice, but many grammarians now omit the period, especially when such numbers designate the serial number of a thing, as a page, chapter, etc.

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4. After "cent" in the phrase "per cent," the period is now usually omitted.
5. The terms 1st, 2d, 3d, 8vo, 12mo, etc., do not require the period as they are not considered abbreviations.
6. In title pages, the period, as well as all other punctuation, is usually omitted at the end of lines.

## II. THE COMMA (,)

1. Of all the marks of punctuation, the comma offers the most difficult in use, and is used with the least uniformity. Some inexperienced or careless writers seem almost to insert it at random, without any regard to its logical effect upon the meaning of the sentence. In the following extract five commas have been improperly inserted. They are inclosed in parentheses.

Still, notwithstanding (,) the truth of the above considerations, it must be acknowledged by any one acquainted with Canadian sentiment (,) that the idea of annexation finds little (,) or no favor amongst Canadians. For annexation means the obliteration (,) and extinction of all national life (,) and characteristics.

In reporting a sermon a reporter wrote:  
Paul said the Bishop was ready to preach to those who were at Rome.

The reporter omitted two commas essential to the meaning of the sentence, which should have read:

Paul, said the Bishop, was ready to preach to those who were at Rome.

2. Parenthetic words, phrases, and clauses, or such as interrupt the sequence, or do not form a part, of a simple sentence, are set off by the comma.

Examples

The question, therefore, is still open.

His true ambition, and a lofty one it must be counted, was to affect the course of events in his time by affecting the course of thought.

Springfield, Mass., is often called the City of Homes.

On the wall hangs the picture of George Washington, the first president of the United States.

The man in black, stately and old, rose slowly in his place.

3. A noun of address is set off by a comma.

Ex. William, whose car is that?

Please come here, Mary.

Do you think, my dear madam, that I am a millionaire?

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4. Nouns in apposition are set off by commas.
- Ex. 1. Johnson, the engineer, won the first prize.  
2. Her daughter, Agnes, is in Europe.
5. Before "of" in phrases indicating residence, position, or title, a comma is used.
- Ex. 1. Theodore Roosevelt, of Oyster Bay, New York.  
2. Senator Hiram Johnson, of San Francisco.  
3. Col. Henry McMillian, of the 5th Division.
6. Between a proper name and a following academic or honorary title a comma is used; also, between two or more such titles used together.
- Ex. 1. W. T. Harris, Ph.D., LL.D., editor in chief.
7. Adverbs and adverbial phrases and clauses that modify an entire clause or sentence are set off by a comma.
- Ex. 1. In the first place, he will tell you a fairy story.  
2. Afterwards, we shall go for a ride.
8. Between words, phrases, and clauses, that are in the same construction and not connected by a conjunction, expressed or implied, a comma is used.
- Ex. 1. Joy, sorrow, care, hope, are the common heritage.  
2. Early to bed, early to rise, make a man healthy and wealthy and wise.
- Note. Where there are two adjectives that qualify the same noun and there is no danger of ambiguity, the comma may be omitted.
- Ex. A sturdy young fellow. A cold clear morning.
9. Repeated words in the same construction in a clause or sentence are separated by a comma.
- Ex. I wait, wait, hoping against hope.
10. Use a comma before a conjunction connecting the last two words in a series of three or more.
- Ex. The estate was left to John, Robert, and William.
11. Place a comma before the conjunctions that mean "but" or "and not": but, though, yet, while, nor.
- Ex. 1. They went, but we stayed.  
2. He was elected, though by a majority of only one.  
3. He was not a good player, yet he was elected captain.  
4. On Thursdays I have an eight o'clock recitation, while on Fridays I have nothing till ten.  
5. I won't be a politician, nor do I want my son to be one.

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12. A declarative sentence is set off by a comma from an immediately following interrogative sentence that depends for its full meaning upon the declarative sentence.
- Ex. 1. You will come home soon, won't you?  
2. This is Monday, isn't it?
13. The ellipsis of words that are common to two or more parts of a sentence, but are expressed only in one part, is indicated by a comma.
- Ex. Reading maketh a full man; conference, a ready man; and writing, an exact man.
14. Phrases or clauses which possess in common a word modified or governed by a different word in each are set off by the comma.
- Ex. 1. An article made of, or containing, bone.  
2. He looked directly at, not away from, the picture.
15. Words placed out of their natural position, as for clearness or emphasis, are set off by the comma if the expression would be awkward or the construction forced or ambiguous without the comma.
- Ex. 1. To the wise and upright, old age brings many joys.  
2. Exasperated by the continual bickerings, he resigned the secretaryship.
16. Contrasted words and phrases are set off by the comma.
- Ex. 1. Work, not words; is what is needed.  
2. Gold and silver, not common metals, were sought for
17. Words used in direct address are set off by the comma.
- Ex. Listen, my children, and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.
18. After "namely," "viz." "that is," "i.e.," "as," "e.g.," etc., introducing an illustration or example, a comma is used.
- Ex. The New England States are six: namely, Maine, New Hampshire, etc.
19. After "Yes," "No," "Well," "Why," etc., introducing a sentence or a clause, a comma is used.
- Ex. 1. Yes, I think so.  
2. Well, I am in no hurry to go.
20. After the formal closing phrase of a letter a comma is used.
- Ex. 1. Yours truly, 2. Yours very sincerely, 3. Your loving son, 4. I am, 5. Respectfully yours,

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21. In the superscription of letters, all punctuation at the ends of lines is omitted by most authorities.
22. Before a short quotation that is not made a separate paragraph a comma is used; also, after a direct quotation that is the subject or object of a following verb.
- Ex. 1. Then he said, "Good night!" and with muffled oar  
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore.  
2. As prior says, "Virture is its own reward."  
3. "The train is coming," said his companion.
23. Two adjacent sets of figures are separated by a comma.
- Ex. 1. In the year 1862, 62 children in the village died of diphtheria.
24. A date explaining a previous date is set off by the comma.
- Ex. 1. Robert Louis Stevenson was born on Nov. 13, 1850, at 8 Howard Place, Edinburgh.
25. Large numbers are separated into groups of three figures each by the comma.
- Ex. 1. The population of the United States in 1915 was 101,151,000.
26. Volume, page, or line numbers following the names of books, magazines, plays, or poems are set off by the comma.
- Ex. 1. National Geographic Magazine, XXIX, 217.  
2. Paradise Lost, 1.880.

## III. THE SEMICOLON (;)

1. Phrases or clauses containing commas are separated from other phrases or clauses in the same sentence by the semicolon.
- Ex. 1. The seasons come and go, and the years pass on; but love abides.  
2. There is a continual warfare between evil and good in the world; but good is the ascendent, and must be victorious at last.  
3. The yield was: 1889, 660 bbls.; 1899, 886 bbls.
2. Two or more sentences in which the relation in thought is very close, and which are therefore written as one sentence, are separated by the semicolon.
- Ex. 1. A knife and inkhorn hung on his dress; we see a rosary in his hand; and when he walked alone he walked swiftly.
3. Biblical references to separate successive chapter numbers are separated by the semicolon.
- Ex. 1. Rev. 21:1; 22:5. Ex. 2. Gen. 5:10; Psa. 23:5

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## IV. THE COLON (:)

1. After the salutatory phrase in a letter or in an address the colon is used.

Ex. 1. Dear Sir: 2. Gentlemen: 3. My dear Sir: 4. My Lord Archbishop: 5. Ladies and Gentlemen:

2. Before a formal quotation a colon is generally used.

Ex. 1. Literally translated, the words of the song were these:  
"The poor white man, faint and weary, came and sat under our tree."

Note. A comma may be used before a short quotation unless the quotation is made a separate paragraph.

Ex. There is much truth in the proverb, "Without pains, no gains."

3. After a clause or sentence introducing a series of particulars a colon is used.

Ex. The results of the mission are: Natives baptized, 126; regular attendants, 125; mission schools, 4; native teachers, 8; native workers other than teachers, 40.

## V. THE EXCLAMATION MARK (!)

1. An exclamation mark is used after an ejaculation, a command, or any other expression of an exclamatory nature, and at the end of a sentence beginning with an interjection.

Ex. 1. Pshaw! 2. Go, go! 3. How beautiful!  
4. Alas, that I should live to see this day!  
5. Oh that those lips had speech!

2. In clauses introduced by the interjection Oh, O, the exclamation mark is not used immediately after the interjection, but at the end of the clause. When used in direct address, Oh is separated by a comma from the name of that which is addressed; but O so used is generally not followed by the comma.

Ex. 1. O for the wings, for the wings of a dove!  
2. Oh, mother! Oh, Eunice!

## VI. THE INTERROGATION MARK (?)

1. An interrogation mark is used at the end of a direct question.

Ex. 1. Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
2. Is it well to wish thee happy?

2. The interrogation mark is not used when an expression denoting inquiry is not in the form of a direct question.

Ex. I was asked if I would write a short account of it.

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3. An interrogation mark, inclosed in parentheses, is used to express doubt about something in the text to which it is related by its position.

Ex. He offered me a bag of real (?) alligator skin.

## VII. THE DASH (—)

1. The dash is used to mark a suspension of the sense; a faltering in speech, a sudden change in the construction, or an unexpected turn of the thought.

Ex. 1. If you will listen, I will explain — but perhaps you do not care to hear.  
 2. A self-hunting dog is — a canine — that is — a dog of peculiar traits.  
 3. I saw her — my pulse even now stops at the thought — in the direct path of the runaway animal.  
 4. He sometimes counsel takes — and sometimes snuff.

2. The dash is used to set off parenthetical matter, as a clause repeated for emphasis; also, to indicate the omission of words or letters, as between the first and the last dates of a period, etc.

Ex. 1. I will never — never, I say — agree to this iniquitous proposal.  
 2. During the decade 1870-1880.  
 3. Secretary B—.

## VIII. PARENTHESES ( )

1. Parentheses, or marks of parentheses, are used to set off a clause, translation, or the like, which is inserted in a sentence but is independent of it in construction.

Ex. 1. Know, then, this truth (enough for man to know):  
 Virtue alone is happiness below.  
 2. We were now nearing our destination (we had been five days on the river), and our spirits rose.  
 3. Nil desperandum (Never despair)!

## IX. BRACKETS ([ ])

1. Brackets are used to inclose sentences, phrases, or words in, or appended to, quotations or interpolated in a text as being additional or foreign to it.

Ex. 1. He is just as cheerful as when you was [were] here.  
 2. The city at this time [early in the eighteenth century] had but 4,000 inhabitants.  
 3. The next definition is: "Another term for the ear. [So in Latin.]"  
 4. The eruption began [I was present myself at the time] with a detonating report.

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## X. QUOTATION MARKS (" ")

1. Quotation marks (consisting of two inverted commas at the beginning and two apostrophes at the end of the quoted word or words) are used to inclose all direct quotations.

Ex. "When I am dead," said one of the keenest of modern minds, one of the greatest of modern poets, "lay a sword on my coffin, for I was a soldier in the war for the liberation of humanity."

2. In all quotations, excepting extracts from plays, quotation marks are put at the beginning of every paragraph occurring within the quotation, in addition to those at the beginning and at the end of the extract.
3. Commas and periods should be placed within the closing quotation marks; semicolons and colons, without. The interrogation point and exclamation point should be placed within the quotation marks when part of the quotation; otherwise, outside.
4. Single quotation marks are used to indicate a quotation within a quotation.

Ex. The witness said: "I distinctly heard him say, 'Don't be late'; and then I heard the door close."

## XI. THE APOSTROPHE (')

1. The possessive of most singular nouns is formed by adding an apostrophe followed by an s.

Ex. 1. The dog's teeth. 2. John's book. 3. Longfellow's poems.  
4. Hortense's gown. 5. A friend of George's.

2. The apostrophe is used in other's, one's, another's, but not in its, hers, his, ours, yours, theirs.

Ex. It was another's fault. The book is hers. A friend of ours.

3. An apostrophe without an added s is used to form the possessive of singular nouns ending in a sibilant, where the repeated sibilant would be disagreeable to the eye or ear, as in words of two or more syllables, with the last syllable unaccented, esp. when the following word begins with a sibilant.

Ex. Moses' commands. For conscience' sake. Dickens' stories.  
Ulysses' son.

4. The possessive of plural nouns not ending in s is formed by adding an apostrophe followed by an s.

Ex. Men's and women's shoes. Children's toys.

5. The possessive of plural nouns ending in s is formed by adding an apostrophe.

Ex. Boys' caps. Girls' coats. Carpenters' tools.



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6. An apostrophe is used before an s added to the last of two or more nouns in the same construction to indicate the possessive.

Ex. The Representative from Vermont's vote. Brown and John's arithmetic.

Note. This construction should be avoided as it is considered clumsy and inelegant.

7. The omission of a letter or letters from a word or of one or more figures from a date is marked by an inserted apostrophe.

Ex. Don't. I've. He's. Who'd 'Tis. 'Gainst. O'er.  
You'll. I'd. The class of '35.

8. An apostrophe followed by an s is used to form the plurals of figures and signs, of words mentioned without regard to the meaning, and one form of the plural of letters.

Ex. A million is written by 1 followed by six 0's.

He uses too many I's.

The sentence has three and's in it.

A's. B's.