

## Punctuation Rules

PUNCTUATION MARK	WHEN TO USE IT
PERIOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To separate complete thoughts/full sentences within a paragraph.</li><li>• At the end of each paragraph in a text.</li><li>• At the end of a full text.</li></ul>
COMMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To separate all the elements in a list (even the one before the last). All the elements must be of the same grammatical level. <i>The applicants were smart, athletic, sociable, and hardworking.</i></li><li>• After introductory words at the beginning of a sentence. <i>However, we will let you know of any changes.</i></li><li>• After introductory phrases at the beginning of a sentence. <i>Three decades later, that same law was passed.</i></li><li>• To set off clauses, phrases, and words that provide non-essential information. <i>The referee, a tall and heavy man, failed to mark the penalty.</i></li><li>• Before one of the seven coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet) when they connect two or more independent clauses. <i>The attendants witnessed the injustice, but no one said a word.</i></li><li>• Near the end of a sentence to separate contrasted coordinate elements or to indicate a distinct pause or shift. <i>She was just tired, not sick.</i></li><li>• In place of a verb that has been mentioned before. <i>There are constant traffic accidents: some are caused by mechanical failures; others, by human mistakes.</i></li><li>• For items in geographical names, dates, and addresses, and titles in names. <i>Atlanta, Georgia</i> <i>April 13, 2003</i> <i>Elizabeth Frag, PhD, will speak.</i></li><li>• To signal the beginning of a quotation: <i>Steve Jobs said, "Stay hungry, stay foolish."</i></li></ul> <p>Do not use commas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To separate the subject from the verb <i>All team members, welcomed the change in rules. (Incorrect)</i> <i>All team members teams welcomed the change in rules. (Correct)</i></li><li>• To separate the verb and its object <i>The leaders carefully assessed and analyzed, the situation. (Incorrect)</i> <i>The leaders carefully assessed and analyzed the situation. (Correct)</i></li></ul>

SEMICOLON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instead of a period, join two independent sentences when the second one is closely related to the first one or restates it: <i>The country was prospering like never before; people had money to spend, and the economy was growing.</i></li> <li>• To join two independent sentences when the second one begins with a conjunctive adverb. <i>The police took a series of measures; nevertheless, the robberies continued.</i></li> <li>• To join elements of a series when each item already includes commas. <i>There were earthquakes on January 2, 2021; June 4, 2022; and March 8, 2023.</i></li> </ul>
COLON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To join two independent sentences when the second one explains or emphasizes the first one. <i>The police took a series of measures: they increased the number of surveillance cameras and the members' wages as well.</i></li> <li>• After an independent clause when it is followed by a list, a quotation, an appositive, or other ideas directly related to the independent clause. <i>I know what her problem is: dyslexia</i></li> <li>• At the end of the greeting in a business letter. <i>To Whom It May Concern:</i></li> </ul>
PARENTHESIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To set off nonessential, additional, or clarifying material (dates, information, sources). <i>World War II (1939-1945) was one of the most traumatic events in contemporary history.</i></li> </ul>
DASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To emphasize content. Place it before and after the content or only before when the content is followed by a period. <i>His attitude was defiant – even aggressive.</i></li> </ul>
ELLIPSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To indicate the omission of one or more words within a quoted sentence. <i>When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution... they were signing a promissory note..."</i></li> <li>• To indicate faltering speech, a pause, or a sentence left unfinished intentionally. <i>"It was not my intention ... I mean ... at least not consciously."</i></li> <li>• To catch the reader's attention. <i>It should not strike me as funny ... but it does.</i></li> </ul>
QUOTATION MARKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To set off a direct quotation. Commas and periods are placed inside the quotation mark; colons and semicolons are placed outside. <i>As Nelson Mandela said, "It always seems impossible until it's done."</i></li> <li>• Place questions and exclamation marks according to the situation. <i>He asked, "Isn't it a strange phenomenon?"</i> <i>Have you heard Nelson Mandela's saying, "It always seems impossible until it's done."?</i></li> <li>• To indicate an ironic or unusual use of a word. <i>Many injustices have been committed in the name of "religion."</i></li> <li>• To set off titles of short works (poems, songs, magazine or newspaper articles, essays, films, etc.). <i>Everybody has read Robert Frost's "The road not taken."</i></li> </ul>

To learn more:

Leal-Isida, R., González Barranco, A. & Carrizales Guerra, Y. M. (2023). *Guías del Centro de Escritura. Orientaciones para desarrollar textos y discursos académicos y profesionales*. Editorial Digital Tecnológico de Monterrey.

Merriam Webster, Inc. (n.d.). All About Ellipses. In *Merriam Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved April 24, 2024, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/grammar/ellipses-definition-uses#:~:text=Ellipsis%20points%20are%20periods%20in,That's%20the%20basics>.

Purdue University. (n.d.). Brief Overview of Punctuation. In *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Retrieved April 23, 2024, from [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/punctuation/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/punctuation/index.html)



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