

Punctuation



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Grammar is the system and structure of language. Proper grammar in writing ensures your thoughts and opinions are understood by the reader. **Punctuation** is one important mechanic of grammar because it provides structure to your writing and guides the reader more easily through your essay.

Commas (,) indicate a pause between parts of a sentence. Parts of a sentence include an **independent clause**, a **dependent clause**, **subordinating conjunction**, or **coordinating conjunction**. An independent clause contains a subject, a verb, and is a complete thought. A dependent clause contains a subject and a verb, but is not a complete thought; it instead adds to an independent clause's meaning. A subordinating conjunction is a word or phrase that connects an independent and dependent clause or coordinate words in one clause. Coordinating conjunctions join words, phrases, or clauses of equal importance.

Common subordinating conjunctions: If, since, as, when, although, while, after, before, until, because
Common coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS): For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

Use Commas:

1. To join two independent clauses before a coordinating conjunction.
 - E.g: I like writing, **but** I hate punctuation.
2. After an introductory phrase, prepositional phrase, or dependent clause.
 - E.g: **If** you use punctuation correctly, your writing will be clearer.
3. To separate words within a series or list.
 - E.g: Elements of grammar include punctuation, verb tenses, and word order.
4. To separate extraneous details from a sentence.
 - E.g: Spelling, **an element of orthography**, is not an element of grammar.
5. Before quotation marks.
 - E.g: He said, "Punctuation isn't hard, you just need to know the rules!"
6. Between adjectives describing the same noun.
 - E.g: In reality, punctuation is actually very helpful, fun, and interesting.
7. After a transitional word or words.
 - E.g: I do understand punctuation, however, I'm not great with commas.

Apostrophes indicate possession.

1. When indicating ownership by a singular noun, put the apostrophe before the "s."
 - E.g: Sarah's
2. When indicating ownership by a plural noun, put the apostrophe after the "s."
 - E.g: Peoples'

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3. If a singular noun ends with an “s,” add an apostrophe after the “s” or an apostrophe “s” to it.
 - E.g: James’s
 - E.g: James’

Semicolons (;) are used to:

1. Join two independent clauses when the second clause is of equal importance and related.
 - E.g: Semicolons are versatile in academic writing; they can improve your sentence flow if you learn to use them correctly.
2. Join elements of a series when those individual elements include commas.
 - E.g: Oklahoma City, OK; Tulsa, OK; Stillwater, OK.
3. Join two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb like however, therefore, for example, otherwise, etc.
 - E.g: The weather forecast predicted rain all day; however, we ended up having sunshine.

Colons (:) are used to:

1. Join two independent clauses when the second clause is more important.
 - It’s not just a boulder: it’s a rock.
2. Introduce a quotation, explanation, or list of nouns.
 - I went to the store to buy some things: milk, eggs, bread, and fruit.

Parentheses () enclose words, clauses, or sentences that clarify or add information within a complete clause.

- E.g: I brought a delicious pie (**apple with a crumb crust**) for the picnic.

Hyphens (-)

1. Connect words to form a compound word that describes a noun.
 - E.g: I received **hands-on** training during the program.

En Dashes (–) (Ctrl + Number -)

1. Used to connect a range of things
 - E.g: Pages **14–24**
 - The SSOC is open from **8:00am–5:00pm** on Mondays

Em Dashes (—) emphasize or set off extra information between them. (Alt + Ctrl + Num -)

- E.g: Exhausted, his legs burning **– a testament to the difficult climb –** he finally reached the summit.

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Quotation Marks (“”) enclose direct quotes, titles of short poems, song titles, short stories, essays, speeches, chapter titles, short films, and television episodes.

1. Commas and periods are placed **inside** the closing quotation mark while colons and semicolons are placed **outside**.
2. If the quote is a question, the question mark goes **inside** the quotation marks.
 - E.g: He asked, “What is the difference between colons and semicolons?”
3. If the sentence surrounding the quote is a question, the question mark goes **outside** the quotation marks. The same rule applies to exclamation points.
 - E.g: How is punctuation “actually very helpful, fun, and interesting”?

Ellipses (...) indicate the omission of words.

1. If you want to exclude irrelevant or extraneous information from a direct quote, you can use ellipses in place of this information. You can input ellipses to exclude words at nearly any point in the quote as long as it still makes sense and does not detract from the original intended meaning.
 - Full quote: “Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind.”
 - “...those who matter don't mind.”
 - “Be who you are and say what you feel, because... those who matter don't mind.”
 - “...Because those who mind don't matter...”
 - “Be who you are and say what you feel...”