



Punctuation

Writing Center Hours: 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM M-Th,
8:30 AM- 4:30 PM F, 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM S-S
Email: okc.tutoring@okstate.edu
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Definition: The marks, such as periods, commas, and parentheses, and more, are used in writing to separate sentences and their elements and to clarify meaning.

Commas:

You'll use a comma for a number of reasons, including the following:

- Use a comma to join two independent clauses and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so).

Road construction can be inconvenient, but it is necessary.

- Use a comma after an introductory phrase, prepositional phrase, or dependent clause.

To get a good grade, you must complete all your assignments.

- Use a comma to separate elements in a series.

On her vacation, Lisa visited Greece, Spain, and Italy.

- Use a comma to separate nonessential elements from a sentence.

John's truck, a red Chevrolet, needs new tires.



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- Use a comma between coordinate adjectives (adjectives that are equal and reversible).

The irritable, fidgety crowd waited impatiently for the rally speeches to begin.

- Use a comma after a transitional element (however, therefore, nonetheless, also, otherwise, finally, instead, thus, of course, above all, for example, in other words, as a result, on the other hand, in conclusion, in addition)

For example, the Red Sox, Yankees, and Indians are popular baseball teams.

- Use a comma with quoted words.

"Yes," she promised. Todd replied, saying, "I will be back this afternoon."

Semicolons:

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses when the second clause restates the first or when the two clauses are of equal emphasis.

Road construction in Dallas has hindered travel around town; streets have become covered with bulldozers, trucks, and cones.

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb (however, therefore, moreover, furthermore, thus, meanwhile, nonetheless, otherwise) or a transition (in fact, for example, that is, for instance, in addition, in other words, on the other hand, even so).

Terrorism in the United States has become a recent concern; in fact, the concern for America's safety has led to an awareness of global terrorism.



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- Use a semicolon to join elements of a series when individual items of the series already include commas.

Recent sites of the Olympic Games include Athens, Greece; Salt Lake City, Utah; Sydney, Australia; Nagano, Japan.

Colons:

- Use a colon to join two independent clauses when you wish to emphasize the second clause.

Road construction in Dallas has hindered travel around town: parts of Main, Fifth, and West Street are closed during the construction.

- Use a colon after an independent clause when it is followed by a list, a quotation, an appositive, or other ideas directly related to the independent clause.

Julie went to the store for some groceries: milk, bread, coffee, and cheese.

Parentheses:

- Parentheses are used to emphasize content. They place more emphasis on the enclosed content than commas. Use parentheses to set off nonessential material, such as dates, clarifying information, or sources, from a sentence.

Muhammed Ali (1942-2016), arguably the greatest athlete of all time, claimed he would "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."



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Dashes:

- Dashes are used to set off or emphasize the content enclosed within dashes or the content that follows a dash. Dashes place more emphasis on this content than parentheses.

Perhaps one reason why the term has been so problematic—so resistant to definition, and yet so transitory in those definitions—is because of its multitude of applications.

Quotation Marks:

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotations. Note that commas and periods are placed inside the closing quotation mark, and colons and semicolons are placed outside. The placement of question and exclamation marks depends on the situation.

*He asked, "When will you be arriving?" I answered, "Sometime after 6:30."
Use quotation marks to indicate the novel, ironic, or reserved use of a word.*

History is stained with blood spilled in the name of "justice."

- Use quotation marks around the titles of short poems, song titles, short stories, magazine or newspaper articles, essays, speeches, chapter titles, short films, and episodes of television or radio shows.

"Self-Reliance," by Ralph Waldo Emerson