

Punctuation

APOSTROPHE [']

To Indicate Possession

- For words not ending with an s or a z sound, add 's. the baby's rattle/ the children's tree house/ somebody's drink
- For words ending in an s or a z sound add an apostrophe: the babies' rattle/ the Guinness' sake/ the thesis' length
- With names of more than one syllable, use either 's or ('), unless additional s makes word difficult to pronounce: Thomas's (Thomas') / Aziz's (Aziz') / Genesis' (not Genesis's)
- Used in expressions denoting time or measure: a four week's trip / a dime's worth / a stone's throw

To Indicate Omission

- Show that letters or numerals have been omitted: it is – it's / cannot – can't / you are you're / 1929 – '29

Plural of Letters or Numbers

- Add 's to pluralize letters or numbers: mind your p's and q's / a roomful of VIP's / during the 1960's (or 1960s)

BRACKETS [[]]

- Enclose words in a quotation that did not appear in the original: "I respect him (Nixon) for what he did," he said.

COLON [;]

- Indicate a list, example or that a strong assertion will follow to complete an introductory statement: The monk takes three vows: chastity, poverty, and service.
- After a formal salutation in a letter: Dear Sir or Madam

COMMA [,]

- Prevent the reader from misunderstanding a sentence (Change: If you cook Rick will do the dishes. To: If you cook, Rick will do the dishes.)
- Distinguish the various elements of a series: The torn, tattered, soaking flag was lowered.
- Some sentences begin with introductory words or phrases; these are connected to the main body of the sentence with a comma: Breathing heavily, the man returned from the chase.
- A sentence may contain information that is not essential to its grammatical structure, but does contribute to its exact meaning; this information is set off from the sentence by commas: The mayor, who was very ill, attended the event.

DASH [-] For a more personal and dramatic flavor, dashes can be used to set off extra, information: My wife – this friend, this angel, this love – lay dying before me.

- Use a dash instead of the word to in reference to dates, pages, paragraphs, verses and cantos: 1930-1940/ pages 16-25

ELLIPSIS [...]

- Use to indicate the omission if a word or words: "And so... ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." John F Kennedy

EXCLAMATION POINT [!]

- End of statement of strong emotion, urgency or excitement
- If spoken, it would be gasped, shouted, groaned or cried: Look out! / Oh, my aching head! / Yes, yes, yes, Yes!

Note: Overuse of exclamation points will lessen their impact

HYPHEN [-]

- Separate a prefix from a proper noun: *French-Canadian*

- Show the division of a word at the end of a line: *I don't understand what you are trying to say.*
- Use in all numbers ranging from twenty-one to ninety-nine, and in fractions: *thirty-one/ sixty-six/ one-fifth*
- Designate years: *the nineteen-sixties/ nineteen sixty-nine*
- Use in certain compounds made up of nouns and prepositional phrases: *son in -law/ hand- to-hand/ man- of-war*
- Use in titles compounded with *ex* and *elect*: *ex-wife/President-elect*

PARENTHESIS [()]

- When information is remotely connected with meaning of the sentence, it is usually enclosed in parentheses: Their *divorce (which occurred on my birthday) was a shock to me.*
- Use in legal documents or where double from is used to enclose a figure inserted to confirm a statement given in words: *thirty (30) days/ fifty (50) dollars*

PERIOD [.]

- Use at the end of any sentence that makes a statement: *That's all I can remember.*
- Indicate abbreviations: *c.o.d. /dept*
- Use before a decimal: *\$30.50/3.145*

QUESTION MARK [?]

- Place at the end of any sentence that asks a question:
Did Gloria throw that book? / Gloria threw the book?
- A question mark in parentheses may indicate doubt or irony: *The high point (?) came when the door prizes were awarded.*

QUATATION MARKS[""]

- There are two classes of quotations-**direct** and **indirect**
- Words spoken in direct discourse require quotation marks; indirect quotations require no quotation marks, and are commonly introduced by **that (Direct quotation: The President said, "I not am a crook!, " Indirect quotation: The President said that he was not a crook.)**
- A quotation within a quotation is enclosed by single quotation marks: Mike said, "*The President said, 'I am not a crook'.*"
- Punctuation belonging to quotation (i.e., period, comma) is set within quotation; punctuation not connected with quotation (i.e., colon, semicolon) is set outside closed quotation marks: *Avril said, "Don't count on it."/ Roula said, "I'm not hungry"; but her stomach was growling.*
- Set off words that writer does not claim (i.e., words of other persons, slang or jargon that must be "decontaminated" by using quotation marks): *This type of heroin is called "crack."/ Where is this "just society" of yours?*
- Use around titles of books, plays, poems, and essays; italics or underling could be used, but not mixed styles: *I have to read Chapter 9, "Lost in Thought."/ Have you read Das Kapital?*

SEMICOLON [;]

- Separate sentence elements of equal weight: *The results were wonderful; it was his method we questioned.*
- Use in lists of names with titles or addresses: *Invitations were sent to Mr. Henry Fisher, M.A.; Ms. Helen Hunter, M.A.; and Dr. Joyce Lacher, Ph.D.*
- Separate groups of words dependent on a general term or statement: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident- that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights..." Thomas Jefferson*

SLASH [/]

- Indicate alternatives: *Dear Sir/Madam; up/down; mother/father*
- Separate abbreviations: *45 mi/hr, 10 lb/psi*