

Punctuation is the marks in your writing. It separates thoughts, words, and parts of speech to give your audience direction when they read. It lets them know when to pause, take a breath, stop, change tone, or even when to be shocked! Punctuation helps us to develop strong sentence structure, and by following the basic rules below the quality of your ideas can be communicated more strongly and clearly.

Clauses

Clauses are the parts of sentences. There are independent and dependent clauses.

Independent clauses are complete sentences on their own, but they contain a subject and a verb.

*Construction can be inconvenient
The house has a big backyard*

Dependent clauses contain a subject and verb, but they are incomplete sentences on their own.

*Since I don't have any money
Though the flowers continue to bloom*

Clauses have to be connected by punctuation.

Commas

Commas indicate separation. They are used to separate ideas or elements in a sentence.

*They can be **overused!** Follow the guidelines below when in doubt.

Use to separate 2 independent clauses.

Construction can be inconvenient, but it is necessary.

Use after an introductory phrase.

Since I don't have any money, I can't take a trip.

Use to separate a series.

Tara visited England, Italy, and Spain.

Use to separate non-essential elements.

Vera's car, a red Ford, needs new tires.

Use between coordinate adjectives.

The irritable, fidgety crowd waited impatiently for Ozzy's concert to start.

Use after a transitional phrase.

For instance, the Yankees are a popular team.

Semicolons

Semicolons separate clauses and phrases of equal emphasis and material. They are not necessary, but when used correctly are impressive!

Use to separate 2 independent clauses, but only when the second is the same as the first.

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

Use to separate 2 independent clauses, but the second clause must begin with a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase.

Global warming has become a recent concern; in fact, the concern for the planet has led to conferences worldwide.

Use to join a series that already has commas in it.

Recent sites of the Winter Olympics include Sochi, Russia; Vancouver, Canada; Turin, Italy; Salt Lake City, Utah.

Colons

Colons emphasize. They are used to join 2 independent clauses when you want to especially emphasize the second clause.

Road construction in Calgary has hindered travel around town: parts of Main Street are closed.

Parenthesis

Parenthesis are used to emphasize content more than a comma would.

I visited several northern European countries (England, Ireland, Scotland) on my trip last year.

Dashes

Dashes work like parenthesis. They emphasize the content within them.

My cousins - Tim, Tina, and Tod – arrived from Calgary yesterday.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are used to show where a quote begins and ends. They are also used around the titles of short stories, short poems, song titles, newspaper/magazine articles, essays/speeches, and TV episodes.

Jim asked, "Where are we going?"

"Lenore" by Edgar Allan Poe

Italics

Italics are used for titles of novels, academic journals, TV shows, long poems, operas, and databases. Italics are also used for foreign words, and to give a word emphasis.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by J.K Rowling

Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité

The Journal of Integrated Studies

EBSCO

Seinfeld

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