

Punctuation:

There are 14 punctuation marks that are commonly used in English grammar. They are the full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, comma, semicolon, colon, dash, hyphen, square brackets, braces, brackets, apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipsis. Following their correct usage will make your writing easier to read and more appealing.

1. The **full stop** (.) is placed at the end of declarative sentences, statements thought to be complete and after many abbreviations.
 - As a sentence ender: *Jane and Jack went to the market.*
 - After an abbreviation: *Her son, John Jones Jr., was born on Dec. 6, 2008.*
2. The **question mark** (?) is used to indicate a direct question when placed at the end of a sentence.
 - *When did Jane leave for the market?*
3. The **exclamation mark** (!) is used when a person wants to express a sudden outcry or add emphasis.
 - Within dialogue: *"Holy cow!" screamed Jane.*
 - To emphasise a point: *My mother-in-law's rants make me furious!*
3. The **comma** is used to show a separation of ideas or elements within the structure of a sentence. Additionally, it is used in numbers, dates, and letter writing after the salutation and closing.
 - Direct address: *Thanks for all your help, John.*
 - Separation of two complete sentences: *We went to the movies, and then we went out to lunch.*
 - Separating lists or elements within sentences: *Suzi wanted the black, green, and blue dress.*

Whether to add a final comma before the conjunction in a list is a matter of debate. This final comma, known as an Oxford or serial comma, is useful in a complex series of elements or phrases but is often considered unnecessary in a simple series such as in the example above. It usually comes down to a style choice by the writer.

4. The **semicolon** (;) is used to connect independent clauses. It shows a closer relationship between the clauses than a full stop would show.
John was hurt; he knew she only said it to upset him.

5. A **colon** (:) has three main uses.

- The first is after a word introducing, a quotation, an explanation, an example, or a series.

He was planning to study four subjects: politics, philosophy, sociology, and economics.

- The second is between independent clauses when the second explains the first, similar to a semicolon: *I didn't have time to get changed: I was already late.*
- The third use of a colon is for emphasis: *There was one thing she loved more than any other: her dog.*

A colon also has non-grammatical uses in time, ratio, business correspondence and references.

6. A **dash** is used to separate words into statements. There are two common types of dashes:

- En dash: Twice as long as a hyphen, the En dash is a symbol (--) that is used in writing or printing to indicate a range, connections or differentiations, such as 1880-1945 or Princeton-New York trains.
- Em dash: Longer than the En dash, the Em dash can be used in place of a comma, parenthesis, or colon to enhance readability or emphasize the conclusion of a sentence.

She gave him her answer --- No!

Whether you put spaces around the em dash or not is a style choice. Just be consistent.

7. A **hyphen** is used to join two or more words together into a compound term and is not separated by spaces.

part-time, back-to-back, well-known.

8. **Square brackets** are the squared off notations ([]) used for technical explanations or to clarify meaning. If you remove the information in the brackets, the sentence will still make sense.

He [Mr. Jones] was the last person seen at the house.

9. **Braces** ({}) are used to contain two or more lines of text or listed items to show that they are considered as a unit. They are not common in most writing but can be seen in computer programming to show what should be contained within the same lines. They can also be used in mathematical expressions.

$2\{1+[23-3]\}=x.$

- 10 **Brackets** () are curved notations used to contain further thoughts or qualifying remarks. However, brackets can be replaced by commas without changing the meaning in most cases.

John and Jane (who were actually half brother and sister) both have red hair.

11. An **apostrophe** (') is used to indicate the omission of a letter or letters from a word, the possessive case, or the plurals of lowercase letters. Examples of the apostrophe in use include:

- Omission of letters from a word: *I've seen that movie several times. She wasn't the only one who knew the answer.*
- Possessive case: *Sara's dog bit the neighbour.*
- Plural for lowercase letters: *Six people were told to mind their p's and q's.*

It should be noted that, according to Purdue University, some teachers and editors enlarge the scope of the use of apostrophes, and prefer their use on symbols (&'s), numbers (7's) and capitalized letters (Q&A's), even though they are not necessary.

12. **Quotations marks** (" ") are a pair of punctuation marks used primarily to mark the beginning and end of a passage attributed to another and repeated word for word. They are also used to indicate meanings and to indicate the unusual or dubious status of a word.

"Don't go outside", she said.

Single quotation marks (' ') are used most frequently for quotes within quotes.

Marie told the teacher, "I saw Marc at the playground, and he said to me 'Bill started the fight,' and I believed him".

- 13 The **ellipsis** is most commonly represented by three full stops (. . .) although it is occasionally demonstrated with three asterisks (***)). The ellipsis is used in writing or printing to indicate an omission, especially of letters or words. Ellipses are frequently used within quotations to jump from one phrase to another, omitting unnecessary words that do not interfere with the meaning. Students writing research papers or newspapers' quoting parts of speeches will often employ ellipsis to avoid copying lengthy text that is not needed.

- Omission of words: *She began to count, "One, two, three, four" ... until she got to 10, then went to find him.*
- Within a quotation: *When Newton stated, "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion"... he developed the law of motion.*