

**Improve writing**

**Capitalization**

**and**

**Punctuation Marks**

# Capitalization

- Capitalize the first word of a document and the first word after a period.
- Capitalize proper nouns—and adjectives derived from proper nouns. **Iraq**, **Iraqi**

Other rules: H.W.

# Punctuation Marks

- This lecture looks at the most common punctuation marks used in English
- Being able to use them properly is not simply an exercise in jumping through academic hoops
- Using punctuation marks correctly can greatly enhance both the clarity and the power of your writing.

comma

semicolon

colon

full stop

exclamation  
mark

question  
mark

apostrophe

quotes

double quotes

hyphen

dash

stroke or  
slash

parentheses or  
(round) brackets

square  
brackets

ellipsis

asterisk

# The period (full stop in British English)

- Mark the end of a sentence which is not a question or an exclamation

Baghdad is the capital of Iraq.

- Indicate an abbreviation

We are coming on Fri., Jan. 4.

- Period after a single word

"Goodbye."

- Periods in numbers

13.466

# Ellipses(...)

Use an ellipsis when omitting a word, phrase, line, paragraph, or more from a quoted passage. Ellipses save space or remove material that is less relevant.

"Today, after hours of careful thought, we vetoed the bill."

"Today...we vetoed the bill."

# Comma (,)

- To separate the elements in a list of three or more items

I dedicate this work to my parents, family, and friends.

- Enclosing details

China, one of the most powerful nations on Earth, has a huge population.

# Comma (,)

- Participial phrases

Hearing that her father was in hospital, Jane left work immediately.

- Tag questions

She lives in Paris, does not she?

- Interjections

Yes, I will stay a little longer, thank you.



# The Comma: note

Putting a comma in the wrong place can lead to a sentence with a completely different meaning, look at these two sentences:

- I detest liars like you; I believe that honesty is the best policy. (= I detest you because you are a liar)
- I detest liars, like you; I believe that honesty is the best policy. (= You and I both detest liars)

# Semi-Colon ( ; )

- Separate two related but independent clauses

I like your brother; he is a good friend.

- Separate a series of items that already contain commas

I have lived in Detroit, Michigan; Paris, France; and Sydney, Australia.

- To link sentences that are in opposition to each other

His research methods were fundamentally flawed; nonetheless, he collected the data.

# Colon ( : )

- After a word introducing a quotation, an explanation, an example, or a series

There are many reasons for poor written communication: lack of planning, poor grammar, misuse of punctuation marks, and insufficient vocabulary.

- We also use a colon after a salutation in a business letter

Dear Senator John:

- Within time expressions  
12:15 p.m.

# Question Mark (?)

- At the end of all direct questions

What is your name?

- Do not use a question mark for reported questions

He asked me what my name was.

- Can sometimes appear within sentences

"Why is she here?" asked John.

# Exclamation Mark (!)

- To express exasperation, astonishment, or surprise, or to emphasise a comment or short, sharp phrase

Help! Help! That's unbelievable! Get out!

- To mark a phrase as humorous, ironic or sarcastic

That was clever! (when someone has done something stupid)

# Quotation Marks ( " " / ' ' )

- To cite something someone said exactly  
"I am going to the store now," she said.
- Used with technical terms, terms used in an unusual way, or other expressions that vary from standard usage.

He did some "experimenting" in his college days.

- Use single quotation marks for quotations within quotations

He said, "John cried, 'Do not treat me that way.'"

# Quotation Marks: note

- Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.

The sign said, "Walk." Then it said, "Do not Walk," then, "Walk," all within thirty seconds.

He yelled, "Hurry up."

# Apostrophe ( ' )

- To show that letters are missing. This is known as **contraction**

I'm you'll they'd

**Remember:** contractions are used in informal writing. Essays and reports should not contain informal writing.

- To indicate ownership. This is known as **possession**

School's (singular) Schools' (plural)



# Hyphen (-)

- All words consisting of 'self' combined with a noun, e.g. **self-confidence**
- To join two words or parts of words together while avoiding confusion or ambiguity  
He was an **old-furniture** salesman. (The furniture is old)  
He was an **old furniture** salesman. (The salesman is old)
- With compound numbers from **twenty-one** to **ninety-nine**

# Hyphen (-)

- In written fractions place a hyphen between the numerator and denominator

three-tenths

- When a number forms part of an adjectival compound

France has a 35-hour working week.

- In some cases though, a hyphen does change the meaning of a sentence

I am thinking of re-covering my sofa (= to put a new cover on it)

I would like to recover my sofa. (= from someone who has borrowed or stolen it)

# Dash (--)

- The dash is longer than a hyphen.
- **en-dash** is the same width as a letter N.
- **em-dash** is the same width as the letter M.
- To add parenthetical statements or comments in much the same way as you would use brackets.

You may think she is a liar--she is not.

- To create emphasis in a sentence.  
She might come to the party--you never know.

# Parentheses ( )

- Parentheses refers to round brackets ().
- They are used in a similar way to commas.
- Used to add further explanation, an afterthought, or comment that is to do with our main line of thought but distinct from it.
- They can be replaced by commas in nearly all cases.

He finally answered (after taking five minutes to think) that he did not understand the question.

# Period



Use a period at the end of a declarative sentence and in abbreviations.

# Question Mark



Use a question mark after an interrogative sentence.

# Quotation Marks



Use quotation marks for direct quotations.

# Apostrophe

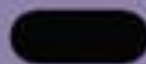
Use an apostrophe in contractions and to indicate possession.

# Comma

Use a comma to separate items in a series, to set off an appositive, or before the conjunction in a compound sentence.



# Hyphen



Use a hyphen to join words serving as a single adjective before a noun, in number words, and to divide words into syllables.

# Exclamation Point

Use an exclamation point to show strong emotion or to give a command.



# Colon

Use a colon to introduce a list and before a final clause that explains something in the sentence.

# Parentheses



Use parentheses around extra non-essential information that is too important to omit.

# Semicolon

Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses that are not connected with a coordinate conjunction.

