

PUNCTUATION

The almost end of this book deals with the mechanics of writing, and that is, the art of punctuating one's writing well. Writing, according to a well-known author, is a lot like fishing and people who are good at fishing study and practice it. They learn which tools to use for catching the best fish in different types of water. No one is born with a fishing talent. Some people enjoy it more than others, but everyone can do it, if they want. The same goes for writing. Honing grammatical skills is essential, and so are punctuating skills.

In this last unit, we'll take a look at the rules for punctuating your thoughts on paper. Remember, punctuations are traffic signals that tell the readers how to peep into the writer's mind and navigate from there. These punctuation marks are like beacons to the readers and communicate the writer's idea without ambiguity.

In English, there are three end punctuations that complete the statements of writers, and they are: (i) the period or the full stop; (ii) the question mark; and (iii) the exclamation mark. They are also called **end marks**.

1.1 End Punctuations

1.1.1 The period

- Use a period at the end of a sentence that is declarative (affirmative or negative), a sentence that makes a request, gives an instruction, or states a command.
 - India is a vast country.
 - I do not enjoy wasting my time.
 - Do this work at once.

- Use a period at the end of a sentence that asks an indirect question.
 - The stranger asked me what the time is.
 - My teacher questioned me when the class was that afternoon.
 - Quentin was eager to know how we were doing in the new place.
- Use a period after an initial and after every part of an abbreviation, unless the abbreviation has become an acronym – an abbreviation that is pronounced as a word, such as AIDS or CRY. Titles – Mr. / Mrs. / Prof. are also abbreviations that take periods. If the abbreviation comes at the end of the sentence, only one period is required.
 - The tour leaves on Mon., Sept. 1, at 4 P.M.
 - Anna works for the CIA.
 - Mrs. Shawn is our new professor.
- Use a period before a decimal and between dollars and cents; pounds and pennies; rupees and paise.
 - A litre of petrol stands at Rs. 102.70 paise.
 - The new test book is \$54.20.
 - I'll be at the library by 4.30 in the evening.
- Use a period with divisions in citations to literary works.
 - Macbeth III. ii. 25 – 46
 - Paradise Lost XI. 47 – 53

1.1.2 The Question Mark

- Use a question mark with all direct questions
 - Is that your mother?
 - Are you feeling cold?
 - Where are you off to?
- Use a question mark when direct questions occur in a series, you may choose to use multiple of them, indicating that a separate answer is expected for each question.
 - Did you finish cleaning your room? Washed your clothes? Cleared the table?

1.1.3 The Exclamation Mark

- Use an exclamation point after a sentence that expresses strong feeling
 - Look out for that speeding truck!
 - I simply can't stand her voice!
- Use an exclamation point after an interjection – a word or phrase expressing strong feeling – when it is written as a single sentence.
 - Oops!
 - My goodness gracious!
- Use an exclamation point after a sentence that begins with a question word but doesn't ask a question.
 - What a fool I've been!
 - How thoughtful of you to post me a card!

1.2 The Designer Punctuations

The other punctuation marks come within the end marks are called designer marks. The first in the list is the comma since it is closest to the period. Commas are very essential to use for better clarity.

12.1 Comma

- Use a comma to help communicate meaning by **eliminating possible misreading**.
 - After calling up Paul Lee, John went to bed.
 - After calling up Paul, Lee John went to bed.
 - After calling up, Paul Lee John went to bed.
- Use a comma to set off **introductory words**.
 - Fortunately, I had carried my hall ticket to the exam hall.
 - Today, I grow a year older.
- Use a comma to set an **introductory phrase**.
 - On the other hand, there are a few disadvantages.
 - Badly injured after the crash, he could hardly walk.

- Use a comma to **set off clauses**.
 - If we plan the meeting carefully, it'll be a great hit.
 - While the children played, the adults enjoyed a great swim.
- **Avoid a comma when you write subordinate clauses after the independent clause**
 - It'll be a great hit if we plan the meeting carefully,
 - The adults enjoyed a great swim while the children played.
- **Commas with Appositives**

An appositive is a word or group of words that immediately follows a noun or pronoun. The appositive makes the noun or pronoun clearer or more definite by explaining or identifying it.

- She won trip abroad, an expensive one in full style.
- The coach for the junior team is Mr. Sanders, a celebrity in his own way.

Sometimes, a proper noun that identifies or further explains will follow a noun or a pronoun. This is also a kind of appositive; it is not set off by commas.

- My sister **Anita** lives in Canada.
- The noted singer **Lata Mangeshkar** is known as the nightingale of India.

- **Commas & Non-restrictive Clauses**

Use a comma if the sentence has an essential clause. In some sentences a clause cannot be omitted without changing the basic meaning of sentences. Omitting such a clause changes the meaning of the sentence or makes it untrue. Such a clause is called **an essential or restrictive clause**.

- All teachers **who had a post graduate trained certificate** are eligible.
- All **post graduate trained certificate** teachers are eligible.
- Use commas to **separate items in a series**
 - The children brought their textbooks, paper, pencil, and an eraser.
 - The children played in the sand, swam in the sea, and ate at the roadside kiosks.

- Use commas to **separate coordinate adjectives**
 - The mountain climbers wore tall, fur caps.
 - The dark, muddy, smelly fish tank hadn't been cleaned since ages.

- Use commas with **parenthetical and transitional expressions**

Parenthetical expressions are inserted in a sentence to qualify, explain, or give the writer's point of view.

- Some people, especially from rural areas, are very conservative in their thought processes.
- In some writing, the formal and the academic types, contracted forms of words are not allowed.

Transitional expressions are inserted in a sentence to qualify, explain, or give the writer's point of view

- As a matter of fact, I enjoy John's company.
- In summary, all is well.

- Use commas with **contrasted elements**

- The mountain climbers were eager, not unenthusiastic.
- The workers, unlike the supervisors, were more prone to industrial pollution.

- Use commas to set off **speech tags in direct speech**

- The teacher said, 'Good morning, class!'
- 'Call for the doctor,' my mother yelled, 'your father's taken ill!'

- Use commas with **mild interjections, words of direct address, the words yes and no, and question tags**

- Mary sings well, doesn't she? / Well, you're right!
- 'Yes, I came late to class. / Fetch me the book, Sushma.

- Use commas with **titles, degrees and extra name elements**

- Prof. Richard Gere, dean of the college, is retiring this year.
- Greene, F.R.C.S, is a general surgeon at Atlantis.

- Use commas with **reversed names**

- Bachchan, Amitabh (Amitabh Bachchan)
- Jackson, Michael (Michael Jackson)

- Use commas with **dates**

- On Friday, September 28, 2021
- Sunday, 12th of May, 1998

- Use commas with **addresses**
 - 116, Urbana Street, Paul's Farm
- Use commas with **place names**
 - I live in Bengaluru, Karnataka State, India
- Use commas with **measurements** and **numbers**
 - The baby weighed seven pounds, three ounces at birth.
 - I need 12,546 copies by next week.
- Use commas with **salutations** and **complimentary closings** in letters
 - Dear Daddy,
 - Yours loving daughter,
- Use commas to prevent **confusions**
 - To my dad, I'm the best child in the world.
 - As we got on, the train pulled off the station.

1.2.2 The Semicolon

The semicolons are used to indicate items that are stronger than a comma, but weaker than a period. It is also called a **weaker period**.

- Use a semicolon to **join closely related main clauses that are not joined by a coordinating conjunction**
 - Man proposes; God disposes
 - Anatomy is not destination; it is simply anatomy.
- Use a semicolon to **join main clauses when a transitional expression or conjunctive adverb introduces the second main clause**
 - She's doing well; for instance, her grades have improved.
 - The game had to begin; however, the rain played spoiled sport!
- Use a semicolon to **join items in a series containing other punctuation**.
 - He has a master's from Shivaji University, Mumbai; a doctorate from MIT, Boston; and a post-doc from a Japanese university.
- **Do not use** a semicolon to **join structures of unequal grammatical rank**.
 - Paul took a short nap; which he deserved badly. ❌
 - Paul took a short nap, which he deserved badly. ✅

1.2.3 The Colon

- Use a colon to **introduce a list of items, as long as the part before the colon is a complete sentence.**
 - The actors cast in the film were: Julie Andrews, Richard Burton, and Dick Van Dyke.
 - We packed the following items for the camp: blankets, flash lights, medical kit, water bottles, etc.
- Use a colon to **introduce a formal quotation.**
 - The President said: "..."
- Use a colon **between two sentences when the second explains the first.**
 - The President ignored the remark made by his opponent: he knew the man knew too much.
- Use a colon **between the title and the subtitle of a book.**
 - Internet Starter Kit: A Complete Guide to Cyberspace
 - Beyond 2020: A Futuristic View of Time
- Use a colon **between volume and page number or between chapter and verse**
 - World Book of Encyclopaedia V: 128
 - John 3:16
- Use a colon **between hour and minute.**
 - 12:53 A.M.
 - 7:20 P.M.
- Use a colon to **introduce a formal salutation.**
 - Dear Operations Manager:
 - Dear Mr. Councillor:

1.2.4 The Apostrophe

Apostrophes communicate essential information in written language. They are not used to form plurals unless it is used in the possessive form.

- Use an apostrophe to **introduce a possessive form**
 - Someone else's umbrella
 - Mother-in-law's dictate
- Use an apostrophe to **introduce periods of time or amounts of money, when they are used in the possessive form**
 - Six months' pay / morning's schedule
 - two cents' worth / dollars' worth

- Use an apostrophe to **introduce a singular noun** that ends in s
 - Maris's batting history
 - Lotus' personal secretary
- Use an apostrophe to **indicate contractions**
 - I'm doing good. The boss ok'd (okayed) the draft letter.
 - The earthquake of '96. Fish 'n' Chips
- Use an apostrophe to **pluralise letters, numbers, abbreviations, and words cited as words**
 - Your l's look like c's
 - Count to 999 by 2's
 - Most banks have ATM's today.
 - I have heard enough of no's from you today!
- **Do not** use an apostrophe **when possessive pronouns (my, mine, our, ours, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs) is used as an adjective**
 - This is their idea. The idea is their's. ❌
 - The idea is theirs. ✅
- **Do not** misuse an apostrophe
 - This is a cat and this is it's tail. ❌ This is a cat and this is its tail. ✅
 - Look whose at the door. ❌ Look who's at the door. ✅

1.2.5 Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are used in pairs to signal the start and the end of a direct quotation, to enclose titles of short works, and to indicate words used as words.

- Use quotation marks with **direct quotations**
 - He said, "I'm famished!"
 - The boy cried, "I don't remember where I dropped my money."
- Use quotation marks to **indicate the titles of short works**
 - I wrote a speech on "Women's Empowerment"
 - Elton John sings "A Candle in the Wind".

- Use quotation marks to **indicate words used as words**
 - My friend called me “mean” and “selfish”.
 - She has had too many of those “healthy diets”
- **Do not misuse/overuse** quotation marks
 - All the boys called her “Fatty” ❌
 - All the boys called her “Fatty” ✅
 - Lost World is a “cool” book. ❌
 - Lost World is a “cool” book. ✅

3.1 Other Punctuation Marks

The last category of punctuations used while writing are as follows:

3.1.1 The Hyphens

A hyphen, or the smallest dash, is that punctuation mark which is used to join words or parts of words.

- Use a hyphen in a **compound modifier when the modifier comes before the word it is modifying**
 - Harvard-educated lawyer
 - Well-ventilated manor
- Use **suspended hyphens** up to a maximum of three (Compound Adjectives)
 - Day-to-day affairs
 - State-of-the-art facility
- Use **a hyphen** with physical quantities, when the unit abbreviation, or symbol is spelled out
 - Six-inches cut
 - 500-tonne weight
 - 100-metres dash
- Use **a hyphen** for all compound numbers from twenty-one through ninety-nine
 - Thirty-two teeth
 - One thousand six hundred and fifty-seven
- Use **a hyphen** for all compound numbers from twenty-one through ninety-nine
 - Thirty-two teeth
 - One thousand six hundred and fifty-seven

- Use a **hyphen** for all spelled-out fractions; but **do not hyphenate fractions** that have been introduced with **a** or **an**
 - More than one-third of voters turned out to be senior citizens.
 - More than a third of voters turned out to be senior citizens.
- Use a hyphen when forming original compound verbs for vivid writing, humour, or special situations.
 - The jay walker’s jig-jazzed gait amazed everyone
- Avoid using a hyphen when word with -ly is used as compound adjective.
 - newly-formed association ❌ newly formed association ✓
 - finely-tuned guitar ❌ finely tuned guitar ✓
- Avoid using a hyphen when there are proper nouns with more than one word.
 - She is an Academy-Award nominee. ❌
 - She is an Academy Award nominee ✓
- Do not leave a space between words that are hyphenated.
 - Harvard – educated lawyer ❌ Harvard-educated lawyer ✓
- If you are not sure whether a compound word needs a hyphen or not, refer your preferred dictionary.

3.1.2 The Dash

The dashes are used to emphasize part of a sentence or to set it off for clarity.

3.1.3 The ‘em’ Dash

- The ‘em-dash’ is used by inserting two dashes without leaving any space (--) to form a big dash (–). This could be used for showing a range
 - The old man – frail and sick – used to beg on the streets.
- These dashes are also used for reversals
 - The was a terrific lad, at his best – when he needed favours!

3.1.4 Parentheses (...)

- These marks indicate helpful but not essential information. It is always advisable not to overuse them since the content could get cluttered with nonessential information.
 - Ann Heathway (President of the Club) is the CEO. ❌
 - Ann Heathway, President of the Club, is the CEO. ✓

- Parentheses are used to enclose supplementary or interpretive information, asides, and after thoughts
 - The advert is for Class IV workers. (janitors, sweepers, gardeners, etc)
- Parentheses are used to enclose numbers or letters used to mark a series in a sentence
 - Bacteria is divided into three groups according to their shape: (1) spheres, (2) rods, and (3) spirals.

3.1.5 Brackets [...]

- Brackets with changes in quoted material.
 - The environmentalist Racheal Carson believes that “problems [with controlling insects] arose with the intensification of agriculture—the devotion of immense acreages to a single crop.

By using brackets to insert the kinds of problems Carson is referring to, the writer avoids having to quote an extended passage.

- Brackets are used to indicate an error in a speech
 - The State of Karnataka has the maximum [sic] number of Covid cases.

3.1.6 The Ellipsis Mark (...)

- The ellipsis mark is three spaced full points (...) indicating that the writer has omitted words.
 - No sooner ... than
 - Not only ... but also
- The ellipsis mark with omitted words or sentences while referencing
 - And life continued ... [omission of rest of the details]
 - KKK ... KKK [the middle portion is not essential while referencing]
 - ... KKK [the earlier portion is not essential while referencing]
 - KKK ... [the later portion is not essential while referencing]
- The ellipsis mark is more in dialogues to indicate an incomplete statement or a deliberate pause when writing dialogues
 - I used the phrase “social responsibility,” and they yelled: “What’s the word you say, boy?”
“Social responsibility,” I said.

“What?”

“Social ...”

“Louder.”

“... responsibility”

3.1.7 The Slash

- The forward slash (/) is used to indicate options or alternative words
 - Use three words and/or a number
 - Everyone must cast his/her votes.
- The forward slash (/) is used to mark off two or three lines of poetry when you run them into your text
 - Mary had a little lamb / little lamb / little lamb
 - Work while you work / play while you play
- The forward slash (/) is used for fractions and ‘division’ sign
 - $4/5$ / $1/10$ / $2/3$
- The back slash (\) is not really an English punctuation mark, but used in computer language
 - `C:\Users\Win\Files\jse.doc`

