

Punctuation

9 Punctuation

A **Punctuation** means the right use of putting in points or stops in writing. The correct use of these stops and marks helps a reader understand the passage correctly as it was meant by the writer. On the other hand, the incorrect use of them can change the entire meaning.

To indicate that the sentence is complete, it should start with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark.

The main punctuation marks are as follows:

• full stop	[.]
• comma	[,]
• exclamation mark	[!]
• question mark	[?]
• semi-colon	[;]
• colon	[:]
• apostrophe	[']
• quotation marks	[“ ”] or [‘ ’]

9.1 Full Stop [.]

A **Full Stop** is used to close a sentence. After a full stop, a new sentence starts with a capital letter.

Examples:

- He appears to have an old head on young shoulders.
- All that glitters is not gold.

Full stops can be used after abbreviations in American English. However, we write abbreviations without full stops in modern British English.

Examples:

- Mr (American English Mr.)
- Dr (American English Dr.)
- kg (American English kg.)

But **do not duplicate a full stop** at the end of the term or phrase if the last letter ends a sentence.

9.2 Comma [,]

A **Comma** generally reflects pause in speech.

We use commas in the following cases:

- **to separate items in a series or a list**

Example:

- a. He lost his money, reputation, and his friends.

- **to separate pair of words of the same class**

Example:

- a. Rich and poor, high and low, men and women, all gathered to greet him.

- **before and after a word in the vocative case**

Example:

- a. I don't know, Jameel.

- **after absolute construction and the participle phrases**

Example:

- a. The weather was nice, we decided to go for a picnic.

- **between words and phrases in apposition**

Example:

- a. Milton, the great English poet, was blind.

- **before and after the words or phrases like indeed, therefore, hence**

Example:

- a. Indeed, it was a big decision.

- **to separate a direct speech from the reporting verb**

Example:

- a. He said, "Let's play cricket."

- **to indicate omission**

Example:

- a. To err is human, to forgive, (is) divine.

- **to separate date of the month from the year**

Example:

- a. She was born on September 11, 2007.

- **to mark words like yes, no, well, etc.**

Example:

- a. Yes, he wanted to do something extraordinary.

9.3 Question Mark [?]

A **Question Mark** is used instead of a full stop in the interrogative/question sentences. After a question mark, a new sentence starts with a capital letter.

Examples:

- a. When will you come back home?

- b. What are you doing?

Question marks are not used after indirect questions.

Examples:

- a. He enquired what I was looking for.

9.4 Exclamation Mark [!]

An **Exclamation Mark** is generally used to close a sentence. However, it comes after interjections and after phrases and sentences expressing feelings, emotions or wishes. After the exclamation mark, a new sentence has a capital letter.

Examples:

- a. What a terrible fire it was!
b. Hurray! We did it.
c. Long live the queen!

It is also used after an emphatic nominative of address.

Examples:

- a. Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى)! Help me.
b. Help me, O Allah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى)!

9.5 Colon [:]

A **Colon** is used before a quotation or a saying.

Example:

- a. Mark Twain said it best: "When in doubt, tell the truth."
b. Feminism: A new wave in gender studies.

Between sentences which are connected in a sense yet independent.

Example:

- a. I and my brother are really excited: We are going to the zoo.

A colon can introduce a list.

Example:

- a. The main points are as follows: (1) ----- (2) ----- (3) -----.

Before enumeration

Example:

The pies liked by Ali are: chicken and mushroom, mince and onion, cheese and onion.

9.6 Semicolon [;]

It shows a pause of greater importance than that shown by the comma. It is also used to separate a series of loosely related clauses.

Examples:

- a. Her court was pure; her life serene.
b. We set out at dusk; the weather was not promising.

A semi-colon is sometimes used instead of a full stop, in cases where the meaning is closely connected.

Example:

- a. It's going to be a great tomorrow; we have paid all our dues; we expect all the privileges listed in the contract.

To separate the clauses of a compound sentence, when they contain commas.

Example:

She was a lovely, young woman; and we all loved her.

9.7 Apostrophe [']

We use apostrophes ['] for three main reasons.

It is used to show contractions.

Examples:

- a. can't = cannot
- b. I'd = I would/ had
- c. it's = it is/ has
- d. who's = who is/ has

To form the plurals of letters and figures. Words that do not usually have plurals sometimes have an apostrophe when a plural form is written.

Example:

- a. Let's discuss the do's and don'ts.
- b. There are a lot of if's involved.
- c. He writes b's instead of d's.

To show possession, we use apostrophe before or after possessive-s.

Example:

- a. The cat's master loves his cat.
- b. It was her teacher's notebook that she lost.
- c. That was my parents' house.

9.8 Quotation Marks [“ ”]

Quotation marks are also called inverted commas in British English. They can be single [' '] or double [“ ”].

Example:

- a. “To be or not to be”
- b. “I need to eat something right now,” she cried.

We often put quotation marks (usually single) around words used as titles or when we give them special meanings.

Example:

- a. His next book was ‘Heart of Darkness’.
- b. The word ‘ransom’ is difficult to pronounce.



Grammar Exercise —2

1. Use appropriate punctuation marks in the following sentences.

- a. We had a great time in France the kids really enjoyed it
- b. Some people work best in the mornings others do better in the evenings
- c. What are you doing next weekend
- d. Mother had to go into hospital she had heart problems
- e. Did you understand why I was upset
- f. It is a fine idea let us hope that it is going to work
- g. We will be arriving on Monday morning at least I think so
- h. A textbook can be a wall between a teacher and a class
- i. The girls father sat in a corner
- j. In the words of Murphys Law Anything that can go wrong will go wrong

Web version of PCTB textbook