

Punctuation Guide

Use this guide to learn the appropriate uses for punctuation marks. To see more examples and additional uses, visit www.thepunctuationguide.com/.

Period .	DO use periods... ✓ To indicate the end of a sentence	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The library is open on Saturdays. 	Apostrophe ’	DO use apostrophes... ✓ To indicate possession	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tom’s dog is called Fido.
	✓ To indicate an abbreviation Note: State abbreviations (AZ, NV, CA) do not include periods unless they end a sentence.	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will meet at 6:00 p.m. Jane traveled to D.C. last year. Joe Smith Jr. went to university in Phoenix. 		✓ To indicate contractions Note: In the past, apostrophes were used in certain cases to indicate plurality (e.g., 1940’s). However, it is now more appropriate to exclude the apostrophe (e.g., 1940s).	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can’t go to the party this weekend. You shouldn’t do that.
Question Mark ?	DO use question marks... ✓ To indicate a direct query	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you go to the grocery store? When is the test? Have you seen Jonathan? Can you come to the family reunion? 	Dash —	DO use dashes... ✓ To include additional information	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Joneses—Mr. Jones, Mrs. Jones, and little Sarah Jones—went camping last summer.
				✓ To stress information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear the blue dress—not the white one—to the wedding.
Exclamation Mark !	DO use exclamation marks... ✓ To indicate enthusiasm, excitement, or anger Note: Except in direct quotations, exclamation points are not used in formal writing.	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was accepted into Harvard! Stop doing that! 	Ellipsis ...	DO use ellipses... ✓ To indicate excluded material Note: Do not use ellipses either at the beginning or end of a direct quote.	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jefferson wrote, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men ... are endowed with certain inalienable Rights” (Declaration).

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Quotation Marks “ ”	DO use quotation marks... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To enclose someone else’s exact words 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janie said to Susie, “It’s hot. Let’s go to the pool.” • The researchers explained the results indicated “sugar is strongly correlated with risk of diabetes.” 	Parentheses ()	DO use parentheses... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To include additional material that is not grammatically integral to the sentence 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shakespeare (who lived during the Renaissance) amazes me with his understanding of complex emotions.
	Note: When you are using a direct quote that contains <i>another</i> direct quote inside, the outside quote uses double quotation marks, and the inside quote uses single quotation marks. Example: The authors write, “Every dictionary of Ancient Greek includes paranoia, translating it as ‘insanity,’ ‘madness.’”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing to murder Duncan, Macbeth cries, “Is this a dagger I see before me?” (2.1.3) 			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To set off items in a numbered or lettered series 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ariadne debated whether to concentrate her English major in (a) rhetoric, (b) literature, or (c) linguistics. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enclose or explain abbreviations and acronyms 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Modern Language Association (MLA) hosts a yearly convention. 	
Colon :	DO use colons... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To introduce a list of items 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary has three favorite ice cream flavors: chocolate, strawberry, and pistachio. 	Semi-Colon ;	DO use semi-colons... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To indicate a connection between two complete sentences 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums have an important purpose; they educate society.
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To clarify separation in lists with internal commas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I went to three cities last month: Las Vegas, Nevada; Seattle, Washington; and Orlando, Florida.