

PUNCTUATION

Punctuation can often seem mysterious, even if one is very familiar with the language. Here are some pointers that should help you unravel the mysteries:

Periods .

Use a period at the end of a sentence that makes a statement.

We went to the movies last night.

Use a period after an abbreviation.

Mr. lbs. Tues. Dr. oz. Oct. etc.

Question Marks ?

Use a question mark after a direct question.

Were you invited to the party?

However, you should not use a question mark if the question in the sentence is asked indirectly.

He asked whether the new job offered a higher salary.

Exclamation Points !

Use an exclamation point after an expression or statement that shows strong feeling.

We did it!

Quotation Marks “ ”

Use quotation marks to enclose the exact words of a speaker or writer.

She said, "I'm finally ready to go."

Periods and commas are always placed inside the quotation marks.

Question marks and exclamation points are placed outside quotation marks except when the quotation itself is a direct question or exclamation.

He said, "I enjoy cooking."

"I enjoy cooking," he said.

Did you say, "We are going away together"?

"Are you coming?" he asked.

Use quotation marks to enclose the title of a short story, essay, poem, or song.

"The Garden Party" was written by Katherine Mansfield

Semi-Colons ;

Use a semi-colon to separate two complete sentences.

The movie started late; we had enough time to buy popcorn

Do not use a semi-colon when two independent clauses are joined by connecting words such as *and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet*. However, if the clauses are joined by *also, however, therefore, then, otherwise, nevertheless, moreover*, you should use a semi-colon.

Tennis is fun; however, one must have a partner.

Use semi-colons to separate items in a series when the items have internal punctuation or are very long.

We visited Montreal, Quebec; Toronto, Ontario; and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Colon :

Use a colon to introduce a list following a noun that names the list.

I have three favourite colours: red, blue and green.

Use a colon to set off a list or statement that is introduced by the words "the following" or "as follows."

The crooks stole the following: a radio, a camera, and a clock.

Commas ,

Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.

I like baseball, football, and hockey.

Use commas on both sides of a word or phrase that interrupts the flow of a sentence.

Cake, for example, is delicious with coffee.

Use commas to set off non-essential material.

Mrs. Lee, our new director of nursing, was in the office early.

Use a comma before *and, but, or, nor, for, so* and *yet* when they join two complete sentences.

He wanted to study engineering at McGill, but he didn't get in.

Use a comma after an introductory word or phrase.

Unfortunately, she can't come to our place tonight.

When they returned from their vacation, they realized that they had been robbed.