

PUNCTUATION RULES

1. END MARKS

- a. **Declarative and Imperative Sentences.** Use periods at the end of declarative and imperative sentences.
 - i. Declarative
 - 1. *Necessity is the mother of invention.*
 - 2. *The mill stands by the little creek.*
 - ii. Imperative (expressing a command, an entreaty, or a polite request)
 - 1. *Go to the ant, thou sluggard.*
 - 2. *Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.*
 - 3. *Will the accused please rise.*
- b. **Questions/Interrogative Sentences.** Questions, including sentences which are made questions by the speaker's intonation, end with a question mark.
 - i. *Who can count the stars?*
 - ii. *You were there at the beginning?*
- c. **Exclamation Points.** Use exclamation points at the end of expressions denoting strong emotion - exclamatory sentences, exclamatory words, and interjections.
 - i. *How are the mighty fallen!* [exclamatory declarative sentence]
 - ii. *Strike for your altars and your fires!* [exclamatory imperative sentence]
 - iii. *Oh death! Where is thy sting!* [exclamatory interrogative sentence]
 - iv. *"Horror! horror!" exclaimed I.* [after exclamatory words]
 - v. *Alas! Is it not too true, what we said?* [after interjections]
- d. **Abbreviations.** Use periods for most standard abbreviations. Some abbreviations, especially acronyms of organizations ("SSPX"), do not use periods.
 - i. *H. G. Wells, Jr.*
 - ii. *Pg. 27*
 - iii. *Thurs., Dec. 26th*
 - iv. *221 Baker St., Apt. B*

2. COMMAS

- a. **Series.** Use commas to separate items in a series. (It is also acceptable to omit the comma following the item before the conjunction, as long as that comma is not needed for clarity: *Mother set places at the table for Jonathan, James and Michael.* See example iii, where the comma after "green" is necessary.)
 - i. *Success depends upon our acting prudently, steadily, and vigorously.*
 - ii. *The wagon flew over the road, across the bridge, and behind the burning fortress.*
 - iii. *She chose ribbons of red and blue, yellow and green, and white and gold.*
- b. **Compound sentences.** Use commas to separate main clauses of a compound sentence when the clauses are separated by a conjunction.
 - i. *The Christmas play had ended, so the ladies began to serve the food.*
 - ii. *He was not fond of the technical language of metaphysics, but he had grappled with its most formidable problems.*

- iii. *The man certainly did utter the jest, though who it was that he stole it from is another question.*
- iv. *He sang and she played. [comma may be omitted if the two clauses are short]*
- c. **Introductory expressions.** Use commas after certain expressions that introduce sentences or main clauses.
 - i. Single words
 - 1. *Well, there is good beef and carrot at two o'clock.*
 - 2. *My, what a strange man you are!*
 - 3. *Indeed, he was the idol of the younger part of the company.*
 - ii. Phrases
 - 1. *In either case, we should decide in favor of clarity.*
 - 2. *Till about twelve o'clock in the morning, these needy persons know not what they shall say.*
 - iii. Adverb clauses
 - 1. *Since thou owns't that praise, I spare thee mine.*
 - 2. *Although they had various success, the advantage remained with the challengers.*
- d. **Interrupting expressions.** Use commas to set off interrupting expressions as follows:
 - i. **Direct address**
 - 1. *Courage, father, fight it out!*
 - 2. *Take, O boatman, thrice thy fee!*
 - ii. **Appositives**
 - 1. *This fell sergeant, Death, is strict in his arrest.*
 - 2. *The butterfly, child of the summer, flutters in the sun.*
 - iii. **Parenthetical expressions**
 - 1. *Integrity is, no doubt, the first requisite.*
 - 2. *A fine day, however, with a tranquil sea and favoring breeze, soon put these dismal reflections to flight.*
 - iv. **Questions**
 - 1. *It is a fact, isn't it, that you just tilled the soil yesterday?*
 - 2. *Something can be done, can't it, to check the storm-flight of these maniacal horses?*
 - v. **Negating expressions**
 - 1. *There should be joy, not sorrow, following the events of this day.*
 - 2. *Strong proofs, not a loud voice, produce conviction.*
 - vi. **Nonrestrictive adjective phrases**
 - 1. *The children, with packages in tow, were sent off to the station.*
 - 2. *Miss Charlotte's students, in their Sunday best, assembled on the stage.*
 - vii. **Nonrestrictive adjective clauses**
 - 1. *On hearing their plan, which was to go over the Cordilleras, she agreed to join the party.*
 - 2. *A few barons, whose names ought to be clear to their country, joined Bruce in his attempt.*
- e. **Dates.** Use commas for dates as follows:
 - i. Day and date
 - It was Thursday, January 12th, when the package was delivered.*

- ii. Date and year
It was March 19th, 1872, when the fighting ceased.
 - iii. Month and year – no comma used
It was March 1872 when the treaty was signed.
 - iv. Date as adjective – no comma is used after the date
The March 20, 1872 edition of the London Times printed the story.
- f. **Addresses.** Use commas for addresses included in sentences (not as used to address an envelope) as follows:
- i. Street and city
He lived at 221B Baker Street, London, at the time.
 - ii. City and state
He lived in London, England, at the time.
 - iii. City, state, and zip code – consider the zip code as part of the state, do not put a comma between the state and zip code.
The headquarters were moved to 11485 N. Farley Rd., Platte City, Missouri 64079, in the spring of last year.

3. SEMICOLONS

- a. **Compound sentences – without conjunctions.** Use semicolons to separate main clauses in a compound sentence when the clauses are not joined by a conjunction.
 - i. *He had not left his resting place; their steps on the soundless snow he could not hear.*
 - ii. *The peasants take off their hats as you pass; you sneeze, and they cry, “God bless you!”*
- b. **Compound sentences – with conjunctions.** Semicolons are also used to separate main clauses in compound sentences even when there is a conjunction between the clauses, if the clauses are particularly long or contain commas within them.
 - i. *When the play was over, the children left the stage and the men set up the tables; so the ladies quickly prepared the dinner plates.*
 - ii. *A third day came, and whether it was on that or the fourth I do not recollect; but on one or the other, there came a welcome gleam of hope.*
 - iii. *Few enough, and scattered enough, were these abbeys, so as in no degree to disturb the deep solitude of the region; yet they were many enough to spread a network or awning of Christian sanctity over what else might have seemed a heathen wilderness.*
- c. **Items in a series.** If there are any commas within items in a series, separate the items by semicolons rather than commas.
 - i. *Present were William, the president; Johann, the vice-president; and Isaac, the treasurer.*
 - ii. *The cities that she dreamed of visiting included Paris, France; London, England; and Lisbon, Portugal.*
- d. **Appositives at the end of a sentence.** Use a semicolon before an appositive which is placed at the end of a sentence and is introduced by words or phrases like *that is*, *for example*, *for instance*, *namely*, *to wit*, etc.
 - i. *There are four seasons; namely, spring, summer, autumn, and winter.*
 - ii. *It is a graminivorous quadruped with forty teeth; to wit, twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive.*

4. COLONS

- a. **Formal list.** Use a colon before a formal list at the end of a sentence.
 - i. *Pronominal adjectives fall under these subclasses: relative, interrogative, or exclamatory.*
 - ii. *Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself.*
- b. **Emphasized statement.** Use a colon before a statement that is the subject of particular focus.
 - i. *The most important lesson they learned was this: keep your eye on the ball!*
 - ii. *But there is this difference: whereas the simple sentence always has a word or phrase for subject, object, complement, and modifier, the complex sentence has another statement or clause for one of these elements.*
 - iii. *It is evident, to those who have studied the language historically, that it is very hazardous to make rules in grammar: what is at present regarded as correct may not be so twenty years from now, even if our rules are founded on the keenest scrutiny of the "standard" writers of our time.*
- c. **Quotations requiring full stop.** Use a colon before quotations which are preceded by an introduction and do not flow readily from that introduction.
 - i. *The headmaster sternly gave this warning: "Any young men who choose to participate in these unseemly behaviors will be summarily dismissed."*
 - ii. *The headmaster said, "Such behavior will not be tolerated." [no colon needed]*
- d. **Appositives that are complete statements.** Use a colon before an appositive which is placed at the end of a sentence if the appositive is a complete statement.
 - i. *He could issue only one final command: Take the castle!*
- e. **With certain numerical combinations.** Use a colon to separate the following:
 - i. Hours from minutes – *6:30 p.m.*
 - ii. Numbers in a ratio – *3:1*
 - iii. Bible chapters from verses – *John 3:16*
 - iv. Volume number from page number – *Harpers 203:37*

5. DASHES/HYPHENS

- a. **Compound words and expressions.** Use dashes to join parts of compound words and expressions.
 - i. *Gentlemen, welcome your commander-in-chief.*
 - ii. *They spent the afternoon gathering forget-me-nots from the lush meadows.*
- b. **Division of words into syllables, including after a syllable at the end of a line when the rest of the word is carried to the next line.** Use dashes to divide words into syllables. If a word is divided between two lines of text, end the line with a dash.
 - i. *Truth-ful*
 - ii. *A suffix is a syllable added at the end of a word; as, truth-ful, kind-ness. A pre-fix is a syllable added at the beginning of a word; as un-truth, mis-spell.*
- c. **Break in thought.** Use dashes to indicate a major break in thought.
 - i. *Even the sound of the waifs – rude as may be their minstrelsy – breaks upon the mid-watches of a winter night with the effect of perfect harmony.*

- ii. *I might fill a volume with the reveries of a sea voyage – with me it is almost a continual reverie – but it is time to get to shore.*
- d. **Items in a series in the middle of a sentence.** Use dashes before and after a series of three or more items in the middle of a sentence.
 - i. *I am not that being – cold, insensate, and morose – which I have seemed to be.*
 - ii. *Verbals – participles, infinitives, and gerunds – are words that express action or being in a general way, but do not limit the action to any time, do not assert it of any subject, and cannot be used as predicates.*
- e. **Emphasized or dramatic appositives at the end of a sentence.** Use a dash before an appositive which is placed at the end of a sentence for added emphasis or dramatic effect.
 - i. *She forwarded to the English leaders a touching invitation – to unite with the French.*
 - ii. *At last the fog lifted enough to reveal the shape beside the gate – a small child!*
- f. **Appositives in the middle of a sentence which include words or phrases such as *that is, for example, for instance, namely, to wit, etc.*** Use dashes before and after these appositives.
 - i. *Some of the horses – the larger ones especially – were able to carry the packages without difficulty.*
 - ii. *One great desire – namely, to express symmetrically and abundantly – is shared by the painter, the sculptor, the composer, the epic rhapsodist, the orator.*
 - iii. *If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot – say St. Paul's Churchyard, for instance – literally to astonish his son's weak mind.*

6. UNDERLINING (italics in print)

Titles. Underline titles of books, newspapers, magazines, full-length movies and plays, works of art, airplanes, ships, and trains. [For printed materials, underline those which would normally be published as an individual work. For those which would not be published separately – short stories, newspaper articles, individual poems, etc. – their titles should be enclosed by quotation marks.]

- i. *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol is performed on stage every December.*
- ii. *The New York Times published the story.*
- iii. *Winston Churchill's portrait graced the cover of the 1940 issue of Time.*
- iv. *The St. Mary's Theatre production of Macbeth was a tremendous success.*
- v. *Young school boys marveled over the paintings of the USS Merrimack, the first frigate with steam power, constructed in 1854.*

7. QUOTATION MARKS

- a. **Direct quotations.** Use quotation marks to enclose a direct quotation.
 - i. *Between every pause was heard the voice of the heralds exclaiming, "Fight on, brave knights!"*
 - ii. *The lessons which these observations convey is, "Be, and not seem."*

- b. **Titles of written works.** Use quotation marks to enclose the titles of written works which would not be printed in a separate publication.
 - i. *Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" was published in his 1910 collection of children's stories, Rewards and Fairies, as a companion piece to "Brother Square Toes."*
 - ii. *The traditional structure of the fourteen-line Italian sonnet is exemplified in John Keats' "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer."*
- c. **Single quotation marks.** Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.
 - i. *"I like the old custom," said the butler, "especially when the children shout, 'come out, come out!'"*
 - ii. *"The tall man then ran into the street," she recounted excitedly, "calling after the girl, 'Halloa! Stop! Where are you going?' It was quite a scene!"*
- d. **Other punctuation marks used with quotation marks**
 - i. **Commas for quoted sentence.** If the quotation is a complete sentence, put a comma at every break between it and the encompassing sentence.
 1. *After he said, "I'm afraid I must leave immediately," he left by the side door.*
 2. *"What were you doing," she asked, "when the horses ran out of the barn?"*
 - ii. **Placement of commas and periods.** Commas and periods always go inside closing quotation marks, whether they are single or double quotation marks.
 - iii. **Placement of semicolons and colons.** Semicolons and colons always go outside closing quotation marks.
 - iv. **Question mark/exclamation point – when quotation is a sentence.** If the quotation is a question or an exclamatory sentence, put the question mark or exclamation mark inside the closing quotes, even if it is in the middle of the encompassing sentence.
 1. *"The tall man then ran into the street," she recounted excitedly, "calling after the girl, 'Halloa! Stop! Where are you going?' It was quite a scene!"*
 - v. **Question mark/exclamation point – when quotation is not a sentence.** If the quotation is not a question, but the encompassing sentence is, use a question mark to end the encompassing sentence, and place it outside the closing quotes. (This rule is the same for exclamatory sentences.)
 1. *Why did you say, "I have no butter"?*

8. PARENTHESES

- a. Parenthetical expressions within a sentence should consist of words which may be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence.

My gun was on my arm (as it always is in that district), but I let the weasel kill the rabbit.
- b. Place end marks (period, question mark, or exclamation point) inside the parentheses if the enclosed expression is meant to stand alone as a sentence.

If the quotation is not a question, but the encompassing sentence is, use a question mark to end the encompassing sentence, and place it outside the closing quotes. (This rule is the same for exclamatory sentences.)
- c. Other punctuation marks (commas, semicolons, etc.) may be placed within the parentheses if these punctuation marks are part of the parenthetical expression (as they are, for example, in this sentence).

9. APOSTROPHES

- a. **Contractions** – Use an apostrophe to show where one or more letters have been omitted.
 - i. *Isn't*
 - ii. *Weren't*
 - iii. *Who's, It's* (which mean *who is* or *who has*, and *it is* or *it has*; be careful not to confuse with *whose* and *its*, which are the possessive forms of *who* and *it*.)
 1. *Who's sounding the alarm? Who's been to Long Island?*
 2. *Whose books are on the desk?*
 3. *It's a beautiful morning. It's been a long day.*
 4. *The horse shook its mane.*
- b. **Plurals of letters**
 - i. Use an apostrophe for the plural of lower-case letters.
 1. *p's and q's*
 - ii. Most upper-case letters do not need an apostrophe for their plural forms. However, for clarity, use an apostrophe for the plurals of the following upper-case letters:
 1. *I's* (to distinguish from *Is*)
 2. *U's* (to distinguish from *Us*)
 3. *A's* (to distinguish from *As*)
 4. *M's* (to distinguish from *Ms*, which is an abbreviation)
 - a. Sorting through the drawers, the printer found eleven *M's*.
 - b. *Ms.* Jamison waited patiently in the corridor.
- c. **Possession of nouns**
 - i. Use an apostrophe to show possession in nouns.
 1. *Michael's*
 2. *student's* (singular), *students'* (plural)
 - ii. If the word ends in *s* or an “s” sound, add an apostrophe only.
 1. *He reviewed each of the clerks' books from the accounting department.*
 2. *The men completed five days' work in less than twenty-four hours.*
 - iii. If you would add an extra syllable when you pronounce the possessive form, add an apostrophe and an *s* even if the word ends in “s.”
 1. *Margaret was the boss's daughter.*
 2. *James's horse was the victor, by a nose!*
- d. **Possession of personal pronouns**
 - i. Apostrophes are never used to show possession in personal pronouns.
 - ii. The words *yours, hers, ours, and theirs* are already possessive in form; the words “*your's, yours', her's, hers', our's, ours', their's, theirs'*” are always incorrect.