

Punctuation Workbook

A brief look at punctuation + exercises

Full stops
Capital letters
Commas
Colons and semi-colons
Speech marks
Hyphens and dashes

From www.howtospell.co.uk

CAPITAL LETTERS

1. To begin a sentence
2. For a title, name of an organisation or institution.
University of Nottingham
British Broadcasting Corporation
Chancellor of the Exchequer
3. For the first word in direct speech.
I said, "What's the use of moaning?"
4. For the important words in titles of books, plays, films etc.
X Factor
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
Murder on the Orient Express
5. For all proper nouns.
Britain, British, Friday, July, Christmas Day, Joanne, English.
6. For abbreviations: BBC, ITV, UN, EU, UK, USA,
7. For first person: I, I am, I'm,

FULL STOP (.)

1. To mark the end of a sentence.
2. To indicate abbreviations: Mr. Dr. no. (number)

COMMA (,)

1. To separate words or phrases when they are used in series. A comma can be used in front of and if it makes the meaning clearer.

Example:

The order includes sherry, German table wine, and spirits.

The comma is necessary before and or it would seem as if the spirits were German as well as the wine.

2. To separate introductory words and phrases like, however, for instance, nevertheless, therefore, etc.

Example: Nevertheless, he decided to continue eating beef.

3. To distinguish a parenthesis - a part of a sentence which may be omitted without destroying the meaning. It usually adds a little more information.

Example:

French people, who are famous for their cuisine, sometimes find English food tasteless. Her passport, which she needed for her holiday, had expired.

4. To separate direct speech from the accompanying words.

Example:

"I hope", she said, "I'll see you again on Saturday".
He shouted, "Who is it?"

5. To separate words used in addressing a person.

Example:

"You should leave now, Sarah, otherwise you might be late."

6. To add emphasis to a clause, often involving time.

Example:

Each time I called him, his phone was engaged.

7. To separate phrases containing a participle (-ing)

Example:

Realising he felt ill, he decided to go alone.

8. To break up long complex sentences for easier understanding.

Example:

There was, at this time, the feeling in college, that the Student Union was arranging too many activities for young students, and paying insufficient attention to the needs of mature students.

SEMI-COLON (;)

This is infrequently used. It is usually used:

1. where a longer pause than a comma is indicated, because there are two separate clauses which are related in subject, but each one could stand alone in individual sentences.

Example:

It is now the autumn season; the leaves are falling quickly.

2. in long lists.

Example:

We stock dry goods; frozen goods; tinned goods; fresh bread; fresh meat.

THE COLON (:)

To introduce a list.

The bench was cluttered with equipment: nuts, bolts, spanners, rusty wire, tins of paint.

THE QUESTION MARK (?)

1. Used only after a direct question.

Example:

To whom were you speaking?

He asked me, "Why are you so early?"

BUT not used after an indirect question.

Example:

I was asking to whom you were speaking.

He wanted to know why I was so early.

THE EXCLAMATION MARK (!)

1. After exclamations. Help! Oh!
2. After commands. Listen please!
3. After interjections. Hooray! We've won!
4. After a phrase to give emphasis.

Example:

"I'm shattered!" said Sunita.

Half-Price Offer Ends Saturday!

What a day!

DIRECT SPEECH

When you use direct speech in a piece of prose or an essay, begin the sentence containing the speech on a new line, and begin a new line whenever the speaker changes.

The two women stood and stared.

"What do you think of that?" asked one.

"I'm not sure," replied the other, "seems a bit odd to me!"

"I don't think I'd ever do it," remarked her friend.

Place all punctuation belonging to the direct speech inside the quotation marks.

"Never again!" he said.

INVERTED COMMAS (“”)

1. To enclose direct speech.

"Where did you leave the bike?" he asked.

2. To distinguish the titles of books, plays etc.

One of Shakespeare's best known plays is "Hamlet".

To indicate a quotation. e.g. She opened "Twelfth Night" and began to read "If music be the food of love....."

BRACKETS ()

Used when a word, phrase or sentence is placed in parenthesis.

Tomorrow (Friday) is the last day of term.

HYPHENS AND DASHES (-)

1. Hyphens are used in compound words like: brother-in-law, full-time,
2. The dash can be used to mark a parenthesis.

Example:

Work experience has a place in most programmes of study and - in the right circumstances - can be more valuable than theoretical exercises.

3. To indicate a break in a sentence.

a) To complete the first part of the sentence.

Example:

A department store has all the items to furnish a home - kitchenware, bedroom suites, dining furniture, bathroom suites, lounge-furniture.

b) To introduce an unexpected ending.

He jumped into the car - then realised it was the wrong one

c) To comment on what has already been said.

She made me a good offer - more than I had expected.

4. When a sentence begins with a list.

Sandwiches, cold rice and pasta dishes, salads, dips - all can be prepared before the party.

Exercise

Punctuate the following sentences:

1. i need some butter garlic onions and milk (4 corrections needed)
2. he left his daughters library book james and the giant peach in the fruit shop (8 corrections needed)
3. They filmed cleopatra in Egypt (3 corrections)
4. why wasnt she happy to get the job (3 corrections)
5. jasmin chloe and harvinder are missing (5 corrections)
6. boys will be boys he said (5 corrections)
7. On my last day they gave me some cards some presents and best wishes for the future (3 corrections)
8. betting on the lottery which is popular in britain brings riches to the few and some say poverty to the many (5 corrections)
9. would you please think about this (2 corrections)
- 10 She went to get a drink didnt she (3 corrections)
- 11 have you been to the dentist recently (2 corrections)
- 12 the womens cloakroom is on the right (3 corrections)

ANSWERS

Punctuate the following sentences:

1. I need some butter, garlic, onions and milk.
2. He left his daughter's library book, James and the Giant Peach, in the fruit shop.
3. They filmed Cleopatra in Egypt.
4. Why wasn't she happy to get the job?
5. Jasmin, Chloe and Harvinder are missing.
6. "Boys will be boys," he said.
7. On my last day, they gave me some cards, some presents and best wishes for the future.
8. Betting on the lottery, which is popular in Britain, brings riches to the few and some say poverty to the many.
9. Would you please think about this?
10. She went to get a drink, didn't she?
11. Have you been to the dentist recently?
12. The women's cloakroom is on the right.

Think about your mistakes and see if you can figure out why the punctuation mark is there, go back over the info sheets.

This is only a brief look at punctuation, which is a complex topic that needs to be studied and worked at.

For more information on punctuation and relevant websites visit www.howtospell.co.uk and go to the lesson section.