



# What does my child need to know?

## Punctuation

Grammatical Term	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Capital letters						
Full stops						
Question mark						
Exclamation mark						
Commas in lists						
Commas in clauses						
Commas for parenthesis						
Apostrophe – contraction						
Apostrophe - possession						
Semicolon – lists						
Semicolon - clauses						
Colon – to introduce						
Colon – for style						
Direct speech						
Reported speech						
Brackets						
Dashes						
Ellipsis						

# Punctuation

## Capital letters

### At the start of a sentence

All sentences should start with a capital letter. **There are NO exceptions to this rule.**

### Proper nouns and names

We give capital letters to any proper noun, This means the actual name of something or someone. We give capitals to all the main words that are part of the name.

#### Examples:

- Michael Paul Jones
- Dordon Primary School
- Tamworth
- Easter
- Manchester City Football Club
- The Battle of Bosworth Field
- Drayton Manor
- Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October
- English

### Titles

We give capital letters to all the main words in titles including books, films and pieces of work. Small words (such as of, an, the a) are not given capital letters **unless** they are the first word of the title.

#### Examples:

- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
- The Prince of Wales
- The Return of the Jedi
- Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

# Abbreviations

When you abbreviate a word, you should use capitals.

**Examples:**

- GCSE
- AA
- BBC
- TV
- RSPCA

# Pronoun 'I'

Whenever you use the pronoun I to represent yourself, you must use a capital letter. **There are NO exceptions to this rule.**

# Common confusions

1. **Common nouns used as names** – People are often tempted to write 'My Mum' or 'My Dog' thinking that it is a proper noun. However, mum and dog are not their names and so you should not use a capital letter. The **exception** to this is when you are using the common noun as their name.

**Example**

- I loved the way Mum was laughing.
  - We called him Dog because we couldn't think of another name.
2. **Importance** – Some people are tempted to use capital letters just to suggest that something is important.

**Example:**

- You must always do your Homework.
- At the school, Football is a popular sport.

This is wrong. Football and homework are not proper nouns and therefore should not have capital letters.

# Commas

The comma is a much misused piece of punctuation. This is partly because there are several different situations in which the comma is the correct piece of punctuation to use. The trick is to identify those situations so as not to use the comma in places where it really should not be.

**The following are some of the situations in which a comma should be used:**

## To separate works in a list of three or more items

The comma is placed between the items except for the last two items where the word and is used. We use the comma to avoid overusing the word 'and'.

**Example:**

**I need to buy milk, bread, eggs and cheese.**

## To separate a subordinate clause from the main clause where the subordinate clause comes first

When a subordinate clause comes before the main clause in a sentence, you use a comma to separate the clauses. This is NOT the case where the main clause comes first..

**Example:**

- **When the rain stopped, I put my umbrella down.**
- **As the evening drew to a close, the children wandered home.**

## To embed clauses within a sentence or for parenthesis

A comma is used to demarcate subordinate clauses and relative clauses contained within main clauses. The subordinate clause is also part of the sentence that can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence – it just adds additional information.

**Examples:**

- **Sam, the youngest pupil in the class, was always on time for school.**
- **The Thames, one of the greatest rivers in Great Britain, passes right through London.**
- **The house, which had stood there for many generations, was demolished today.**

It is important that the embedded clause is opened and closed with a comma. A common mistake is to omit the second comma.

## To separate dates and years, towns and countries

### Examples:

- Alton Towers is near Stoke, Staffordshire.
- Titanic set sail April 10, 1912.

## To separate several adjectives

Commas are used within expanded noun phrases where more than one adjective is used to describe a noun.

### Examples:

- The tall, dark stranger
- A delicious, delicate sponge
- The violent, lashing wind

## To address someone when talking

Commas are used before the name of the person who is being addressed.

### Examples:

- Are you there, John?
- Good morning, everybody.

## Apostrophes

The apostrophe has two main functions – for **contraction** – linking together two words into one contracted version and **possession** – showing to whom something belongs.

## Apostrophes for contraction

One use of an apostrophe is in contracted words which have been joined together and shortened with letters taken out. The apostrophe is used where a letter or letters have been taken out.

### Examples:

He's = he + is

I'd = I + would

They've = they + have

Let's = Let + us

She'll = She + will

Could've = could + have

**\*\* BE CAREFUL when contracting would and have into would've – a common mistake is to write would of and you should avoid this. \*\***

# Apostrophes for possession

The second use of the apostrophe is to show possession –something belongs to someone or something.

## Examples:

- He loved Madrid's architecture. (the architecture of Madrid)
- I was interested in Mark's point of view. (the point of view of Mark)
- The building's walls were well built. (the walls of the building)

These are all singular examples.

- The dogs' bowl was empty. (the bowl of the dogs)
- The ponies' stable burnt down. (the stable of the ponies)
- The teachers' cars were in the car park. ( the cars of the teachers)

Where plurals end in s the apostrophe comes after the s. This is also true of names that end in s.

## Examples:

- Mrs Cross' car is blue. ( the car of Mrs Cross)
- Has anyone seen James' sock? (the sock belonging to James)

# Common mistakes

1. A very common mistake is to put apostrophes in every word that ends in s even if there is no relationship of possession.
  - You can have pea's with your dinner.
  - Tamworth contain's a lot of old buildings.

**If you cannot use the word of instead of the apostrophe it is likely you have made a mistake.**

2. A second common mistake is to put the apostrophe in the wrong place for singular and plural words. This can completely change the meaning of the sentence.
  - The cat's bowl (the bowl of one cat)
  - The cats' bowl (the bowl of more than one cat)
3. Words that do not contain an apostrophe – its, hers, whose
  - The cat likes its food.
  - The book is hers.
  - Whose is this pencil?

**If you write it's, it MUST be short for 'it is' or 'it has' and if you write 'who's' it MUST be short for 'who is' or 'who has'.**

# Semicolons

The semicolon is a great punctuation mark; using it shows that you are a good writer. It will allow you to express your ideas and opinions with more subtlety and precision. We use it in the following ways:

## In complicated lists

The semicolon can be used to sort out a complicated list containing many items, many of which themselves contain commas.

### Examples:

- **The meeting today was attended by Mr Ahmed, City Councillor; Mrs Patterson, a lawyer, who works for Deyton and Smith; Dr Jones, the local doctor and Jo Thomas, the Chair.**
- **Rushing to catch the plane I packed my lightweight summer dress with flowers on; my red straw sunhat; five pairs of shoes (just in case); several brightly-patterned t-shirts and my passport.**

## Separating closely-related independent clauses

The semicolon is also used to connect two closely-related independent clauses, standing in place of a conjunction.

### Examples:

- **Charlie always ate big meals; he got terribly hungry.**

The two clauses here are closely connected but the link has not been made clear. They could have been separated by a full stop.

- **Charlie always ate big meals. He got terribly hungry.**

They could have been connected using a conjunction.

- **Charlie always ate big meals but he got terribly hungry.**

If you are going to use a semicolon to connect two clauses, it is very important that the two clauses are both independent. That means that each clause has to be able to stand alone and make complete sense without the other, or in other words that each part could be a sentence in its own right. If either clause cannot stand alone, a semicolon **cannot** be used.

# Colons

The colon has a number of functions:

## To introduce an idea

The colon introduces an idea that is an explanation or continuation of the one that comes before the colon. The colon can be considered as a gateway inviting the reader to go on.

**Examples:**

- **You don't have much choice: you will need to redo the work.**
- **There is one food that I couldn't live without: pizza.**

You will see that you have some idea of what will come after the colon.

## To introduce a list

You will need to be careful doing this; many people assume that a colon **always** comes before a list but this is wrong. As above, the clause before the colon must make sense on its own.

**Examples:**

- **The cake contained some delicious ingredients: chocolate, syrup, butter and hazelnuts.**
- **The cake contained chocolate, syrup, butter and hazelnuts.**

## Style

A colon can add emphasis and punch to an idea.

**Examples:**

- **The one thing we all love is success.**
- **There is one thing we all love: success.**

Both of these examples are grammatically correct but the second gives more emphasis. You can choose which you prefer.

# Punctuating Speech

There are two ways of putting speech into writing. The speaker's words can either be **reported** or they can be quoted directly in what's called **direct speech**.

## Reported speech

In reported speech, the actual words are not usually quoted directly. They can be rephrased in your own words and there is no need for additional punctuation.

- **The 156 pupils in the year said that the main reason for choosing a subject was that they thought they would do well in it.**
- **The athletes said how pleased they were with the new facilities.**

## Direct speech

This is when you put the actual words that a person speaks into your writing. There are a number of rules to follow in setting out and punctuating speech.

1. The words that are spoken should be put in inverted commas.  
**"He's done really well, you know."**
2. Whenever a new person speaks, you need to start a new paragraph.  
**"What time is dinner?" asked Fred.**  
**"In about half an hour," I replied.**
3. There **MUST** be a comma, full stop, question mark or exclamation mark at the end of a piece of speech. It should be inside the inverted commas.  
**"Can I join you?" she asked**  
**"Stop!" shouted the policeman.**  
**"You're running late," he said.**  
**"I'd thought you'd be ready by now."**
4. If the speech follows where we find out about who is speaking you should use a comma to introduce the piece of speech, before opening inverted commas.  
**Luke replied, "If you like."**
5. If the direct speech is broken up by a speaker's name, you need a comma (or a question mark or exclamation mark) to end the first piece of speech and a full stop or another comma before the second piece (again before opening inverted commas.)  
**"You're on to something," he said, "This isn't right."**  
**"Looking back," she said, "we could have done better."**  
**"Yes!" he cried. "I can't believe we have done it!"**

# Other types of punctuation

There are a number of other punctuation marks that you can use, and they can help add clarity, variety and style to your work.

## Brackets

These are sometimes called parentheses. They are used around parts of the sentence that give additional information that could be removed or is just an aside. **Avoid overusing them.**

**Example:**

- **The sweet shop (which you probably visited in the summer) opens today at noon.**
- **Natalie Wan (who always makes pizza) should be around this evening.**

## Dashes

These can be used as follows:

1. In pairs, to separate information that is not essential to understanding the rest of the sentence (a bit like brackets).

**Example:**

- **Thousands of people – like the ones you have seen on the film – are now at risk of serious famine.**
- **My friend – is she over there by the table? – would like to see you.**
- 

2. To show a break in a sentence where a comma, semicolon or colon could also be used.

**Example:**

- **One thing's for certain – he still needs to hurry up.**
- **Things have changes since last time we came – they have built a new swimming pool.**

Dashes are especially common in informal writing, but it probably best to avoid overusing them in formal writing – semicolons, colons and commas can generally be used in their place.

## Ellipsis

This is the proper name for 'dot, dot, dot'. It is used when a sentence trails off, to give suspense or to show that something is missing.

**Example:**

- **“What the..?” exclaimed Paul, as he saw what was happening.**
- **But Laurie had always been afraid of dark places...**

# Exclamation Mark

This shows that something is said with emotion or emphasis. The main thing to say about these is that they should not be overused.

## Example:

- **“Be careful!” shouted Mrs Smith.**
- **“Goal!” roared Joseph as the ball hit the back of the net.**

To write an exclamation sentence, pupils are to use the openers ‘how’ or ‘what’ and it must include a verb.

## Example:

- **What big eyes you have, Grandma!**
- **How wonderful it is to see you!**