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with **Dr Jonathan**



Punctuation
(Level: Intermediate)

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Introduction



This presentation presents general trends of punctuation use in American academic, journalistic, and general writing.

For the rules applicable to a certain field, organization, or publication, please consult the appropriate style guide.

Period (.), Question Mark (?), and

Exclamation Mark (!)



Period:

- to end a sentence: "The cat jumped over the fence."
- in an abbreviation: "U.S." for United States
- in an ellipsis (when someone goes silent): "So then I said..."
- in informal writing, to add emphasis: "I. Said. No."

Question mark: used instead of a period at the end of a sentence to indicate a question: "Where are you going?"

Exclamation mark: used instead of a period at the end of a sentence to express strong emotion (surprise, fear, anger, etc.): "Help!"

Comma (,) [1 of 2]



- **In lists:** "first, second, and third"
 - A serial/Oxford comma is like this: "first, second, and third." Without the serial comma, it looks like this: "first, second and third."
 - The serial comma is the current standard, but older people may not have been taught to use it. Technically, the last comma is optional and can be added either for clarity or at the writer's preference.
 - Sometimes in lists of adjectives: "It was a large, red rock."
- **In academia, to separate the clauses of a sentence:** "Having gone to the store (participial clause), he bought some chocolate (independent/main clause), but not until he had also chosen a greeting card (dependent/subordinate clause)."
 - Some style guides relax this rule in various ways.

Comma (,) [2 of 2]



- **To separate titles or positions from someone's name:** "John Smith, M.D." or "Jane Adams, director of operations"
- **For every three digits of numbers > 1:** 1,000,000.00000
 - Some style guides don't use it in four-digit numbers: 5288
- **In informal writing,** before or after quotations, or to indicate where there should be pauses in a sentence (or according to personal preference): "He said to the store owner, 'When do you close today?'"

Colon (:)



- **The beginning of a list:**
 - “He said the following numbers: three, eight, seven, and four.”
- **When the text after the colon explains or gives more information:**
 - **In a text:** "The old woman was never alone: she always had several cats to keep her company."
 - **In a title:** "Endless Winter: Captain Cooke in Antarctica"
 - The word after a colon may be capitalized, when the part after the colon is a complete sentence, a proper noun, or if a colon is being used in a title.
- **In informal writing,** a colon can be replaced with a dash (–).

Semicolon (;)



- In formal texts, it indicates a connection between two short, related, complete sentences.
 - In informal texts, a dash (–) or ", and" is more common.
 - **Formal:** They often receive bad storms in New England; the last one was a Category 4.
 - **Informal:** They often get/see bad storms in New England – the last one was a Category 4.
- **If a sentence has multiple comma-separated lists:**
 - The pets' names were Caesar, Sargent, and Cooper for the male dogs; Benji, Katie, and Kacie for the female dogs; and Baxter and Emmett for the rabbits.

Hyphens (-) and Dashes (–) [1 of 2]



- **Hyphens in multiple-word adjectives before nouns:** a high-cost dress, a well-to-do businessman
- **No hyphens in compound nouns with two subwords:** sailboat, racecar
- **Hyphens in compound verbs:** “He freeze-dried the ice cream.”
- **In titles, both hyphenated words are usually capitalized:** “The Five-Year War”
- **Hyphens in telephone numbers:** +1 (234) 567-8900 (traditional) or +1-234-567-8900 (more modern)

Hyphens (-) and Dashes (–) [2 of 2]



- After marriage, some people combine both spouses' surnames into a hyphenated name: Sarah Jones-Morrison
- Dashes:
 - Ranges of numbers (1–10), and other math ways
 - Can link big/important things together: a U.K.–U.S. treaty
 - In informal writing, they can replace commas, colons, semicolons, and parenthetical statements.
- Historically, people used wide dashes without spaces, but now it's old-fashioned: “This is a wide dash—it’s very wide.”

Parentheses () and Square Brackets []

[1 of 2]



- **Parenthetical statements/asides** are usually considered informal, and are replaced with other types of punctuation:
 - “I asked her to come (but I wished she wouldn’t).” → “I asked her to come, but I wished she wouldn’t.”
- **Examples** are sometimes given in parentheses (e.g., this is an example in parentheses).
- **The social sciences** often put bibliographic citations or references in parentheses: “...written by Coleman (1999).”
- **The natural sciences** often put numeric citations in square brackets: “As shown in their paper on microscopy [12]...”

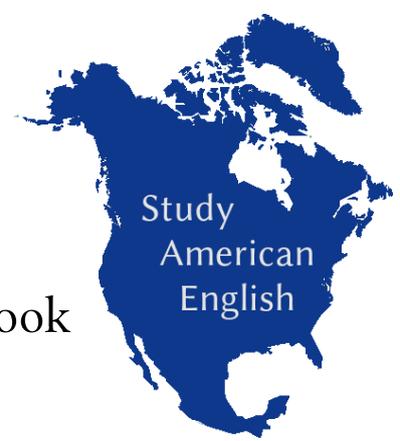
Parentheses () and Square Brackets []

[2 of 2]



- **In academia, abbreviations** are usually defined in this way: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (N.A.S.A.).
- **To give statistical information:** "The mean observation was 4.7 (n=515, df=2)."
- **Optional words or parts of words:** (pre/post)position or [pre/post]position.
- **Words that give context:** "The researchers did both test 1 (for the large animals) and test 2 (for the small animals)."
- **In phone numbers:** +1 (234) 567-8900 (traditional/old)

quotation marks (" or ")



- **For reported speech:** He said, "She told me, 'I'll meet you later.'"
- **In academia,** short works are usually double quoted (e.g., articles, book chapters, and episodes of T.V. shows).
- **In journalism,** works that are not collections are usually in double quotes (e.g., books, films, and entire T.V. shows/series).
- **Commas and periods usually go inside quotations,** and all other punctuation goes inside quotations only if it is part of a quoted statement:
 - "'I'll see you later!' was the last thing she said to me," said the man.
- **"Dead quotes"** highlight a special word: "The British exit from the E.U., or 'Brexit,' was scheduled to happen in March 2019."
- One double quote after a number can mean "**inches**," and one single quote can mean "**feet**:" "He is 5' 8" (five feet, eight inches) tall."

Italics



- **In the social sciences**, long works (e.g., books, collections, films, and T.V. shows) and minor subheadings are often italicized.
 - *The Catcher in the Rye*
 - *Section 4.8.6.1: Aquatic turtles*
- **In math**, variables are often italicized:
 - “Solve the following equation for y : $y = x + z$.”
- **To emphasize technical terms or words in foreign or ancient languages**: “That plant’s scientific name is *Melissa officinalis*.”
- **To emphasize any word** in texts: “I am *very angry* about that!”

Bold Face and Underlining



Bold:

- **The title of a publication** within the publication itself (e.g., this presentation's title, "Punctuation.")
- **To add emphasis** to any word(s): "I am **very angry** about that!"
- **In math texts**, to indicate vectors or matrices.

Underline:

- **With hyperlinks/URLs:** <https://en.wikipedia.org/>
- **In academia**, some style guides say to underline the titles of long works in the bibliography or references section.

Apostrophe-s ('s)



- For showing possession of/by singular things: “the man's hat”
- After singular proper names that end in an 's' sound: “Marx's writings”
- After abbreviations: “He wore a Ph.D.'s robe.”
- To make single letters plural: “Dot your i's and cross your t's.”
- ***Incorrect:*** to use it instead of a plain 's' for the plural of a word
 - **right:** “There were four dogs.”
 - **wrong:** “There were four dog's.”

Forward Slash (/) and Space ()



Forward slash:

- Depending on context, it can mean either **and**, **or**, or **and/or**:
 - "Please buy some apples/pears. Just one or the other – not both."

Space:

- **The current standard is always to use one space:** "This is sentence one. This is sentence two."
- **In the past**, because of how old typewriters worked, people used to use two spaces between sentences: "This is sentence one. This is sentence two."
 - Some older people still use two spaces.

Other Punctuation



- **At (@)** is in email addresses, usernames, etc.
- **Hash/pound (#)** can mean "number," "pounds" (the imperial weight measurement), or as in computers (hashtags, etc.): "Please give me your account #." "That sack weighs 50 #." "the #MeToo movement"
- **Dollars (\$)** means "dollars" in an unknown currency. Specify U.S.D. for U.S. dollars, etc.
- **Percent (%)** usually means numerical percent: 100%.
- **In math,** ^ means exponent or superscript, * means multiplication, / means division, + means addition, and - means subtraction.
- **Ampersand (&)** means "and."
- **Asterisk/star (*)** means all/every or a bullet point.
- **The following symbols often have technical meanings in logic, math, computer code, etc.:** backslash (\), pipe (|), hash (#), curly braces {}, tilda/enya (~), backward apostrophe (`), left/right angle brackets <>, at (@), ampersand (&), asterisk (*), and backquote (`).

Thanks for watching!

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