

# Punctuation Guide

Use this guide to learn the appropriate uses for punctuation marks. To see more examples and additional uses, visit [www.thepunctuationguide.com](http://www.thepunctuationguide.com).

<b>Period</b> .	<b>DO use periods...</b> ✓ To indicate the end of a sentence	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The library is open on Saturdays.</li> </ul>	<b>Apostrophe</b> ’	<b>DO use apostrophes...</b> ✓ To indicate possession	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tom’s dog is called Fido.</li> </ul>
	✓ To indicate an abbreviation  <b>Note:</b> State abbreviations (AZ, NV, CA) do not include periods unless they end a sentence.	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will meet at 6:00 p.m.</li> <li>Jane traveled to D.C. last year.</li> <li>Joe Smith Jr. went to university in Phoenix.</li> </ul>		✓ To indicate contractions  <b>Note:</b> In the past, apostrophes were used in certain cases to indicate plurality (e.g., 1940’s). However, it is now more appropriate to exclude the apostrophe (e.g., 1940s).	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can’t go to the party this weekend.</li> <li>You shouldn’t do that.</li> </ul>
<b>Question Mark</b> ?	<b>DO use question marks...</b> ✓ To indicate a direct query	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you go to the grocery store?</li> <li>When is the test?</li> </ul>	<b>Dash</b> —	<b>DO use dashes...</b> ✓ To include additional information	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Joneses—Mr. Jones, Mrs. Jones, and little Sarah Jones—went camping last summer.</li> </ul>
				✓ To stress information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wear the blue dress—not the white one—to the wedding.</li> </ul>
<b>Exclamation Mark</b> !	<b>DO use exclamation marks...</b> ✓ To indicate enthusiasm, excitement, or anger  <b>Note:</b> Except in direct quotations, exclamation points are not used in formal writing.	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was accepted into Harvard!</li> <li>Stop doing that!</li> </ul>	<b>Ellipsis</b> ...	<b>DO use ellipses...</b> ✓ To indicate excluded material  <b>Note:</b> Do not use ellipses at the beginning of direct quotes. Do not use ellipses either before or after direct quotes when the direct quotes are located in the middle of a sentence.	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jefferson wrote, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men ... are endowed with certain inalienable Rights” (Declaration).</li> </ul>

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<b>Quotation Marks</b> “ ”	<b>DO use quotation marks...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To enclose someone else’s exact words</li> </ul>	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Janie said to Susie, “It’s hot. Let’s go to the pool.”</li> <li>• The researchers explained the results indicated “sugar is strongly correlated with risk of diabetes.”</li> </ul>	<b>Parentheses</b> ( )	<b>DO use parentheses...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To include additional material that is not grammatically integral to the sentence</li> </ul>	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shakespeare (who lived during the Renaissance) amazes me with his understanding of complex emotions.</li> </ul>
	<b>Note:</b> When you are using a direct quote that contains <i>another</i> direct quote inside, the outside quote uses double quotation marks, and the inside quote uses single quotation marks. Example:  The authors write, “Every dictionary of Ancient Greek includes paranoia, translating it as ‘insanity,’ ‘madness.’”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing to murder Duncan, Macbeth cries, “Is this a dagger I see before me?” (2.1.3).</li> </ul>			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To set off items in a numbered or lettered series</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ariadne debated whether to concentrate her English major in (a) rhetoric, (b) literature, or (c) linguistics.</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To enclose or explain abbreviations and acronyms</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Modern Language Association (MLA) hosts a yearly convention.</li> </ul>	
<b>Colon</b> :	<b>DO use colons...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To introduce a list of items</li> </ul>	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary has three favorite ice cream flavors: chocolate, strawberry, and pistachio.</li> </ul>	<b>Semi-Colon</b> ;	<b>DO use semi-colons...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To indicate a connection between two complete sentences</li> </ul>	<b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Museums have an important purpose; they educate society.</li> </ul>
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To clarify separation in lists with internal commas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I went to three cities last month: Las Vegas, Nevada; Seattle, Washington; and Orlando, Florida.</li> </ul>