

# Know your punctuation

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# Outline

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- Full stop
- Comma
- Semicolon
- Colon
- Exclamation Mark
- Question Mark
- Quotation Marks

# Punctuation is Powerful



# Full stop



A full stop is used to mark the end of a sentence.

E.g. I was born in 1961.

A full stop is also used after abbreviations.

E.g. Dr. (doctor)

Prof. (professor)

# Comma

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- A comma represents a short pause.
- Commas are used to separate a list of similar words or phrases.

E.g. 1. Sena lost his lands, money, reputation and wife.

E.g. 2. Sumana bought mangos, pineapples, grapes, and lime from the market.

# Oxford Comma

➤ The Oxford (or serial) comma is the final comma in a list of things.

E.g. Please bring me a pencil, eraser, and notebook.

➤ Omission of the Oxford comma can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.

E.g. We had ice cream, curd and treacle and fruits for dessert.

In this sentence, adding a comma after treacle makes it clear that curd and treacle represents one dish. Therefore, Oxford comma can be used here.

E.g. We had ice cream, curd and treacle, and fruits for dessert.

Transitional words or phrases connect ideas together to provide a 'flow' to your essay/report

(words/phrases like **additionally**, **in addition**, **in contrast**, **however**, **moreover**, **in conclusion**, **nevertheless** etc.)

# Comma

➤ Use a comma after **transitional words/phrases** that begin a sentence.

E.g. They were in trouble. **However**, they did not panic. **Therefore**, they managed to successfully get to safety.

E.g. Jackson always comes to school late. **As a result**, he was punished.

Conjunctions are words which join together sentences and sometimes words.

There are two types of conjunctions: **Coordinating** and **Subordinating**.

# Comma

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➤ Use a comma to separate independent clauses when they are joined by these 7 coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

**Coordinating conjunctions** join two independent clauses.

An independent clause is a simple sentence that makes complete meaning.

E.g. 1. Latha was hungry, **so** she prepared lunch.

E.g. 2. Sena was tired, **but** he didn't rest.



Subordinating conjunctions join a **dependent clause** with an **independent clause**.

A dependent clause is a group of words that does not make a complete meaningful sentence.

# Comma

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- Use a comma to separate a dependent clause from an independent clause when they are joined by subordinating conjunctions: after, as, before, once, since, until, while.

E.g. **Because the test-tube was not wiped properly, the results were inaccurate.**

Note that the comma cannot be used if the independent clause comes before the dependent clause.

E.g. **The results were inaccurate because the test-tube was not wiped properly.**

# Comma

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- Use a comma to mark off words used in addressing people.

E.g. 1. We are going to cut and paste kids. **vs**

We are going to cut and paste, kids.

E.g. 2.



## More Usages of Commas

- When writing a date, a comma is used to separate the day from the month, and the date from the year.

E.g. July 4, 1776, was an important day in American history.

I was born on Sunday, May 12, 1968.

- But if you're writing the date in day-month-year format, you don't need a comma.

E.g. The project will commence on 1st June 2018.

- To introduce or interrupt direct quotations.

E.g. "Why," I asked, "don't you care?"

"I don't care," he said.

- Use a comma to separate a statement from a question.

E.g. I can go, can't I?

- Use a comma to separate contrasting parts of a sentence.

E.g. That is my house, not yours.

# Semicolon

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- A semicolon represents a slightly stronger pause than a comma.
- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses that are closely related in thought.

E.g. Terry always slept with the light on; he was afraid of the dark.

# Semicolon

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- A semicolon is used instead of a comma if a compound sentence is written using transitional words such as however, therefore, furthermore etc.

E.g. 1. The experiment did not give the exact expected result; however, it produced a close value.



Note that a semicolon must come before the transitional word 'however' and a comma must follow it as shown in E.g. 1.

**Do not** write it like this:

E.g. 2. The experiment did not give the exact expected result, however, it produced a close value.



E.g. 1. It rained heavily during the afternoon; however, we managed to have our picnic. ✓

➤ You may also write the same sentence like this:

E.g. 2. It rained heavily during the afternoon. However, we managed to have our picnic. ✓

# Semicolon

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In E.g.2, Note that the sentence is broken into two. A full stop is placed at the end of the first sentence. Then, the next sentence begins with 'However' and a comma follows it.

# colon

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- A colon represents an even greater pause than expressed by a semicolon.
- Use a colon to present a thought which acts as an explanation or continuation of the clause that comes before the colon.

E.g. The primary mode of transmission of the virus has been revealed: It is through direct contact with infected people or contaminated surfaces.

**Note that the clause that comes before the colon must be an independent clause that makes complete meaning.**

➤ **Use a colon to introduce a list.**

E.g. 1. The main parts of a verb in English has the following: the present tense, the past tense, and the past participle.

E.g. 2. My cake contained a secret ingredient: almonds.

E.g. 3. Research has revealed the primary cause of stress for students: written examinations.

# colon



➤ **Use a colon to introduce a quotation.**

E.g. 4. Uncle Iroh said: “While it is always best to believe in one’s self, a little help from others can be a great blessing.”



# Exclamation mark

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- Use an exclamation mark at the end of sentences that express emotion/feeling.

E.g. 1. I am angry at myself!

E.g. 2. I am not sorry!

E.g. 3. Happy birthday, Tikka!

**Do not** use exclamation marks in academic writing.

The above examples are used in situations where informal writing is used.

# Question mark

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The question marks indicate the end of a question

E.g. Why are you reading for an Computer Science degree?



**Do not** place a full stop after using a question mark.

E.g. What do you want in life?.



➤ A reported question should end with a full stop.

E.g. The lady said, '*Where are you going?*'

E.g. The lady asked where she was going.

# Quotation Marks

- When you want to use someone else's words in your writing. Let's say you want to write about something you heard your friend say. You could do it like this:

E.g. John said, *"I really hate when it's hot outside."*

- Double quotation marks are used for quotes within quotes.

E.g. *"'When does the exam period start?' she asked."*

- Quotation marks are often used with technical terms, terms used in an unusual way, or other expressions that vary from standard usage.

E.g. It's an oil-extraction method known as "fracking."

# How do you get punctuation right?

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This is a segment of  
writing skills. Just  
as any other skill,  
you need to practice

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# REFERENCES

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