

English IV

Punctuation Marks in English Grammar

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Lesson 1

Punctuation Marks

There are 14 punctuation marks that are commonly used in English grammar.

They are the period, question mark, exclamation point, comma, semicolon, colon, dash, hyphen, parentheses, brackets, braces, apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipsis.

Punctuation Marks

Sentence Endings

Three of the fourteen punctuation marks are appropriate for use as sentence endings. They are the period, question mark, and exclamation point.

Punctuation Marks

Sentence Endings – The period (.):

The period (.) is placed at the end of declarative sentences (a declarative sentence states facts or an opinion and lets the reader know something specific), statements thought to be complete and after many abbreviations.

- As a sentence ender: *Jane and Bill went to the market.*
- After an abbreviation: *Her son, John Jones Jr., was born on Dec. 6, 2008.*

Punctuation Marks

Sentence Endings – The question mark (?):

The question mark (?) is used to indicate a direct question when placed at the end of a sentence.

- *What is Jane doing tonight?*

For an indirect question, a period is placed at the end of the sentence.

- *I wonder what Jane is doing tonight.*

Punctuation Marks

Sentence Endings – The exclamation point (!):

The exclamation point (!) is used when a person wants to express a sudden outcry or add emphasis.

- Within dialogue: *“Oh no!” screamed Jane.*
- To emphasize a point: *The customer’s complaints make me furious!*

Punctuation Marks

Comma, Semicolon, and Colon

The comma, semicolon, and colon are often misused. Each of these are used to indicate a pause or break in a sentence. In some instances, these punctuation marks are not interchangeable. In other instances, it's up to the discretion of the writer.

Punctuation Marks

The comma (,):

The comma (,) is used to show a separation of ideas or elements within the structure of a sentence. Additionally, it is used in numbers, dates, and letter writing after the salutation and closing.

- Direct address: *Thanks for all your help, John.*
- Separation of two complete sentences: *We went to the movies, and then we went out to lunch.*
- Separating lists or elements within sentences: *Susan wanted the black, green, and blue dress.*

Punctuation Marks

The comma (,):

When a date consists of the day of the month followed by the year, the day of the month should be followed by a comma. When the day of the week is provided before the month, the day of the week should be followed by a comma.

When the date appears in the middle of a sentence, commas should appear both before and after the year.

- *The store closed its doors for good on Wednesday, October 15, 1958.*
- *Her arrival on Monday, April 11, 1988, was considered a turning point for the company.*

No comma is used between the month and the year when they are the only two elements in the date.

- *The store closed its doors for good in October 1958.*

Punctuation Marks

The semicolon (;):

The semicolon (;) is used to connect independent clauses. It shows a closer relationship between the clauses than a period would show.

- *Let's go to Magic Park; it's where the fairies live.*

The semicolon is also used between two independent clauses linked by a transitional expression (e.g., accordingly, consequently, for example, nevertheless, so, thus).

- *Heavy snow continues to fall at the airport; consequently, all flights have been grounded.*

Punctuation Marks

The semicolon (;):

The semicolon can also be used in lists with internal commas. In this usage, the semicolon acts as a sort of super-comma.

- *The meeting attendees included Mrs. Perkins, the kindergarten teacher; Mr. Shumate, the sixth grade teacher; Ms. Wallace, the P.E. teacher; and Mrs. Barber, the principal.*
- *In the fall, I'm traveling to Santa Fe, New Mexico; Sedona, Arizona; Whitefish, Montana; and Seattle, Washington.*

Punctuation Marks

The colon (:):

The colon (:) can be used at the end of an independent clause (a group of words that could feasibly stand alone as a complete sentence) that is followed by a list.

- *He was planning to study four subjects: politics, philosophy, sociology, and economics.*

The colon is used to separate two independent clauses when the second explains or illustrates the first.

- *I did not have time to change clothes: I was already late.*

Punctuation Marks

The colon (:):

The colon can be used to emphasize a phrase or single word at the end of a sentence.

- *The jury finally reached a verdict: guilty.*

In the salutation of a formal business letter, use a colon rather than a comma.

- *Dear Mr. Hudson:*

When you write the time, you use a colon.

- *It is 4:30 p.m.*

Punctuation Marks

Dash and the Hyphen

Two other common punctuation marks are the dash and hyphen. These marks are often confused with each other due to their appearance but they are very different.

Punctuation Marks

The dash (–):

A dash (–) is used to separate words into statements. There are two common types of dashes: en dash and em dash.

En dash: Twice as long as a hyphen, the en dash is a symbol (–) that is used in writing or printing to indicate a range, connections or differentiations. Depending on the context, the en dash is read as “to” or “through.”

- *The 2010–2011 season was our best yet.*
- *You will find this material in chapters 8–12.*

Punctuation Marks

The dash (—):

Em dash: Longer than the en dash, the em dash can be used in place of a comma, parenthesis, or colon to enhance readability or emphasize the conclusion of a sentence.

- *When the car was finally delivered—nearly three months after it was ordered—she decided she no longer wanted it.*
- *Upon discovering the errors—all 124 of them—the publisher immediately recalled the books.*
- *She gave him her answer — No!*

Punctuation Marks

The dash (—):

Two em dashes can be used to indicate missing portions of a word, whether unknown or intentionally omitted.

- *Mr. J— — testified at the hearing.*

Punctuation Marks

The hyphen (-):

A hyphen (-) is used to join two or more words together into a compound term and is not separated by spaces.

For example: *part-time, back-to-back, well-known.*

En dash: 1990 – 1995

Em dash: something — something

Hyphen: state-of-the-art

Punctuation Marks

Brackets, Braces, and Parentheses

Brackets, braces, and parentheses are symbols used to contain words that are a further explanation or are considered a group.

Punctuation Marks

Brackets ([]):

Brackets ([]) are the squared off notations used for technical explanations or to clarify meaning. If you remove the information in the brackets, the sentence will still make sense.

- *He [Mr. Jones] was the last person seen at the house.*

Punctuation Marks

Braces ({}):

Braces ({}) are used to contain two or more lines of text or listed items to show that they are considered as a unit. They are not commonplace in most writing, but are used in various programming languages, certain mathematical expressions, and some musical notation. They should never be used in place of parentheses () or square brackets [].

Punctuation Marks

Parentheses [()]:

Parentheses [()] are curved notations used to contain further thoughts or remarks. The parenthetical material might be a single word, a fragment, or multiple complete sentences. Parentheses can be replaced by commas without changing the meaning in most cases.

- *The president (and his assistant) traveled by private jet.*
- *The conference call will be held at 9:00 a.m. (EST).*

Punctuation Marks

The Apostrophe (’):

An apostrophe (’) is used to indicate the omission of a letter or letters from a word, the possessive case, or the plurals of lowercase letters.

Omission of letters from a word (contraction): *I've seen that movie several times. She wasn't the only one who knew the answer.*

Possessive case: *Sara's dog bit the neighbor.*

Plural for lowercase letters: *Six people were told to mind their p's and q's.*

Punctuation Marks

Quotations marks (" "):

Quotations marks (" ") are a pair of punctuation marks used primarily to mark the beginning and end of a passage attributed to another and repeated word for word.

- *"Don't go outside," she said.*

Single quotation marks (' ') are used most frequently for quotes within quotes.

- *Marie told the teacher, "I saw Marc at the playground, and he said to me 'Bill started the fight,' and I believed him."*

Punctuation Marks

The ellipsis (...):

The ellipsis is commonly represented by a set of three periods (...). The ellipsis is used in writing to indicate an omission, especially of letters or words. Ellipses are frequently used within quotations to jump from one phrase to another, omitting unnecessary words that do not interfere with the meaning, thus avoiding text that is not needed.

Omission of words: *She began to count, "One, two, three, four..." until she got to 10, then went to find him.*

Within a quotation: *When Newton stated, "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion..." he developed the law of motion.*