

PUNCTUATION REFERENCE GUIDE

Refer to examples on OWL and as marked in your essays.

(;) SEMICOLONS

- Use between two independent clauses instead of a period when a transition word (nevertheless, therefore, in contrast, etc) begins the second clause.
- Use to replace a comma in a “complex series”—a series that has commas within one item of the series/list.
- Use to replace a comma when joining two independent clauses that are joined by a coordinating conjunction (compound sentence) that already contain commas.

(:) COLONS

- Use following an independent clause to introduce a list, an appositive and a quotation.
- Use between sentences when the first sentence introduces the second.
- Others: ratios, time, formal greetings

(‘) APOSTROPHES

- Use to indicate possession (ownership or relationship) by adding an ‘s.
- Use in contractions to indicate a missing letter. (Note: It’s = it is, and is *not* possessive; *never use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns hers, his, its, ours, yours and theirs.*)

** Refer to OWL for exceptions and other rules*

(“) QUOTATION MARKS

- Use in direct quotations that are four or fewer lines. Block Quotes (<4 typed lines) require indentation and are not set off with quote marks.
- Use to indicate glossary or technical terms, language translations and irony. (You may also use italics for the same purposes as long as you are consistent throughout.)

**OWL shows you how to use in a sentence with periods and commas.*

(—) DASHES:

- Use to interrupt or end a sentence with information (definitions, examples, synonyms, asides).
 - Use for suspense or contrast
- USE SPARLINGLY

() PARENTHESES

- Use similar to a dash to interrupt a sentence; however, parentheses deemphasize information while dashes highlight information.
- Use to enclose numbers or letters in a list.

(-) HYPHENS

- Don’t hyphenate words at the end of a line; write the complete word on the next line.

- Use after certain prefixes and before certain suffixes.
- Use with compound words (two or more words combined to express one concept) that come **before** the noun that they describe; these compound words are called compound modifiers. Do not hyphenate, however, if the first word of the compound modifier ends with *ly*, or is *most/more* or *less/least*.
- Use between compound words to clarify meaning for the reader (even if not a compound modifier).
- Use with certain spelled-out numbers.

Other rules covered in OWL include *ellipses, brackets, periods, question marks, exclamation marks, slashes, italics, abbreviations, capitals, and numbers*

Reminders:

1. **Till is not a word.** It is until.
2. **In order to** means “to.” Review wordy/redundant phrases and eliminate them.
3. **It’s=it is *only*.** The possessive form does not have an apostrophe (its).
4. **Don’t write December 11th, 2004.** That is how you pronounce it. Write “I was born December 11, 2004, in Missoula, Montana, just north of the Bitterroot Valley.”
5. **Watch common comma errors:**
 - a. The product’s size was incorrectly described on the website, and more suited for a child than an adult.
 - b. I will recommend ~~that~~ they maintain a higher standard on their site, and ~~will recommend~~ investigate the quality of the other products they distribute. (Note the words that can be deleted without changing meaning.)
 - c. When you mess with someone from Butte; you mess with everyone, trust me they got what they deserved.
 - d. That was just the first day there were more problems to come.
6. **Correct random capitalizations.**
 - a. The Bull River and the Noxon Reservoir wrap from North to South around this area with the Idaho state line separating it to the West.
 - b. The Audience will most likely want to know how much the product cost.
7. **Avoid starting sentences with numbers.**
 - a. 54 miles south on Highway 89 is the quiet town of Gardiner, the north entrance of Yellowstone National Park.
 - b. Generally, write out 0-9; use numerals for 10 and higher.
8. **Correct un-parallel structure** by making sure your lists are in consistent grammatical form.
 - a. As a teenager, I became more of a ranch hand; I changed pipe, roughed potatoes, and *discovering* the hard work involved in raising crops and cattle.
9. **Hyphenate Compound Modifiers.**
 - a. The 15-year-old boy was my friend.
 - b. The boy, my friend, was 15 years old.

10. Active voice is more concise and lively than the passive voice. With the active voice, the subject comes first; the subject is delayed in the passive voice, which is more wordy and often uses the past tense of “to be” in the verb phrase (predicate).

- a. *Active: The car hit the truck.*
- b. *Passive: The truck was hit by the car.*

PUNCTUATION EXERCISES

OBJECTIVES: 1) Practice using basic punctuation
2) Learn how to use the handbook as a reference guide

DIRECTIONS: Follow the directions for each of the categories below.

Semicolons: Cross out each unnecessary semicolon in the following paragraphs, and substitute any other punctuation mark that may be needed.

As a result of its depiction in horror films and novels; the vampire has a decidedly unsavory reputation as a parasitic creature that attacks human beings and sucks their blood. The truth is; unfortunately, it does feed on the blood of animals. While its connection with a certain night-stalking human in a black cape is purely fictional; it does indeed thrive on a nightly meal of blood.

The preferred meal of the vampire bat is the blood of domestic animals such as; cows, pigs, horses, and sometimes turkeys and chickens. However, it has also been known to feed on sleeping humans. With its long, sharp incisor teeth, it slashes open the skin of its prey; then, with a specially adapted tongue, it laps up the blood that flows from the wound. The bat has chemicals in its saliva that prevent blood from clotting while the bat feeds.

Colons: At each ^ mark, decide whether the sentence requires a colon. If it does, add the colon above the insertion mark.

The Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, Russia, is one of the world’s foremost museums of art. It contains ^ the art of many civilizations and artists. Among the masters

represented are ^ Rembrandt, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and El Greco. It also has a large collection of works from more modern paints such as Paul Cezanne, Pablo Picasso, and Claude Monet. Numerous countries are represented, including ^ Spain, France, Italy, and the Netherlands. In addition to paintings, the museum had collections in other art forms ^ tapestries, coins, silver, furniture, and armor.

Apostrophe: Add apostrophes to the underlined words wherever required by convention.

1. One place that tourists to England often visit is Britains Westminster Abbey.
2. The abbey's actual name is Londons Collegiate Church of Saint Peter in Westminster.
3. Its the place where Englands kings and queens are crowned.
4. Royalty are also married there, and noted poets Geoffrey Chaucer and Robert Browning are buried in Poets Corner.
5. The church was originally a Norman church, but Henry III demolished it in 1245 and began a new structure that would take centuries to complete.
6. The transepts and part of the nave were finished in only three years time, but the remainder took many more years to complete.
7. The western towers were Christopher Wrens and Nicholas Hawksmoors contributions.
8. These noted architects are responsible for some of its fame as a historic monument.

Hyphens: Insert hyphens wherever they are needed at the ^ marks.

1. The African elephant is well^known for its size.
2. A male elephant might weigh five and one^half to six tons, and a female might weigh up to four tons.
3. Both male and female elephants might grow to a ten^foot height.
4. The non^African elephants of south^central^Asia are somewhat smaller.
5. The fourteen^ or fifteen ^ year^ old elephant has reached sexual maturity.

6. The elephant lifespan is about sixty^five or seventy years.
7. A newborn elephant calf weights two^to three^hundred pounds.
8. It stands about thirty^ three^ inches high.

Commas: Add commas to the following sentences between main clauses that are joined by coordinating conjunctions or to set off introductory elements.

Most people have more knowledge than they are aware of when it comes to predicting the weather and meteorologists don't seem to mind having the layperson dabble in forecasting. In fact they often help. One indication of weather is wind speed but most of us are not any more scientific about it than knowing that the day is windy or very windy. However meteorologists define wind by its effect.

Directions: Add commas to the following sentences where necessary.

1. Mathew Henry said "None so blind as those who will not see."
2. The rose green and gold corals were like dazzling underwater flowers.
3. January 7 1997 is the date when the 105th Congress convened.
4. Such small prey which are quickly snapped up are swallowed whole.
5. Alligators once widely hunted for their skin came close to extinction.
6. To conclude we believe that women should be afforded equal opportunities as men.

Directions: Cross out all the misused commas in the following paragraph.

An important source of water, is underground aquifers. These are deep, and sometimes huge layers of water, that are trapped between layers of rock. The water is contained in porous rock, or in sediment. Deep wells are drilled through the top players of impervious rock, and produce a flow of water. The wells are sometimes called, artesian wells.