Punctuation Guide

Commas (,) indicate a separation of ideas or elements within a sentence.

- **Commas are used to separate three or more words**, phrases, or clauses (sentence parts) in a series.

  For example: I bought a banana, *an orange*, *and a peach at the supermarket today.*

- **Commas are used after an introductory dependent clause or subordinate clause** (a clause that cannot stand alone as a complete sentence.).

  For example: Since we were running late, *we skipped eating dinner.*

- **Commas indicate that introductory words and phrases** moved from the end of the sentence.

  For example: In the end, *we decided to go to the movie.*

- **Commas are used between independent clauses** (complete sentences) joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

  For example: I walked the dog, *and I did the dishes.*

- **Commas are used after "if" clauses**

  For example: If I study hard, I will pass the test.

- **Commas set off nonessential phrases or clauses** (phrases that can be removed without changing the sentence's overall meaning) or appositives (words or phrases that rename a noun).

  For example: My cousin, ***who recently won a gold medal in swimming,*** *said it would be best if I picked her up from the airport.*

  Jorge Torres, our senator, was born in California.

Apostrophes (') show possession and indicate where a letter has been omitted to form a contraction.

Singular (one) nouns

- To show possession, add an apostrophe and an "s" to singular nouns or indefinite pronouns that end in "one" or "body".

  For example:

  someone's book

  the dog's collar

  the magazine's pictures

somebody's leftovers

Plural (more than one) Nouns

- Add only an apostrophe for plural possessive nouns ending in "s".

    For example:

    my parents' car...

    the musicians' instruments...

Contractions

- Used in contractions (two words which have been combined into one) to mark where the missing letter or letters would be.

    For example:

    It's (It is)

    Let's (Let us)

    They're (they are)

Colons (:) follow independent clauses and call attention to the information that comes after.

- 'Colons come after the independent clause (complete sentence) and before the word, phrase, sentence, quotation, or list they are introducing.

    For example:

    Lately, I have had only one thing on my mind: graduation.

    Lately, I have had one thing on my mind: graduating from college.

    Lately, I have had only one thing on my mind: I can't wait to graduate.

    Lately, I have had several things on my mind: papers, grades, and finals

- **Never** use a colon after a verb that directly introduces a list.

    For example:

    ~~Some of the comics I most love are: Batman, Spiderman, and Superman.~~

Semicolons (;) separate clauses or phrases that are related and that receive equal emphasis.

- Semicolons join two independent clauses (complete sentences) that are closely related if no coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) is used.

    For example:

    I was feeling depressed today; I ate all the ice cream.

    Abraham was moved by the opera; Jeffrey kept looking at his phone.

- Semicolons indicate to a reader that the information in both sentences should be taken together.

    For example:

    She examined the ancient book; however, it was too dark to make out the words.

Dashes (—) can be used interchangeably with parentheses and sometimes commas. Oftentimes, dashes contribute to the fluidity of a lengthy sentence and add emphasis to specific bits of information.

- Dashes can be used to "interrupt" yourself or add additional context mid-sentence.

    For example: Taylor Swift's massive success with her re-recordings—specifically and most recently Red (Taylor's Version)—can be analyzed using Plato's four ends of music.

- Dashes can also add additional thoughts at the end of sentences (oftentimes, the remainder of the sentence after the dash would be an incomplete sentence if written by itself.

For example: The effects of gender roles greatly impact children throughout their whole lives—from early to later developmental periods (Saygan, & Uludağlı, 2021).

Ellipses (…) represent a pause or indicate something has been intentionally left out of a direct quote. They indicate to the reader that the original passage has been modified.

- If you want to include what a speaker said at the beginning and the end of a quote, but there's a part in the middle that's unnecessary, you can remove that middle part and replace it with an ellipsis.
- Different style guides have different regulations for ellipses, but for this guide the ellipses with spaces between the periods (. . .) from The Chicago Manual of Style is used.
- In formal writing, the ellipses is placed between brackets when used within a quote [. . .] to show that the editors added the ellipsis, not the original speaker.

    For example:

    [ORIGINAL QUOTE]

*"It must be obvious, **from the very start,** that there is a contradiction in wanting to be perfectly secure in a universe whose very nature is momentariness and fluidity."*

[QUOTE WITH AN ELLIPSIS]

*"It must be obvious **[. . .]** that there is a contradiction in wanting to be perfectly secure in a universe whose very nature is momentariness and fluidity."*

- Ellipses can also be used as a pause for dramatic effect or suspense in creative writing.

    For example: "The tomb's door slowly opened to reveal . . . a children's toy."

- Ellipses are often used to indicate when a speaker trails off into silence in creative writing.

    For example: *"Are you a vegetarian or pescatarian or . . ."*