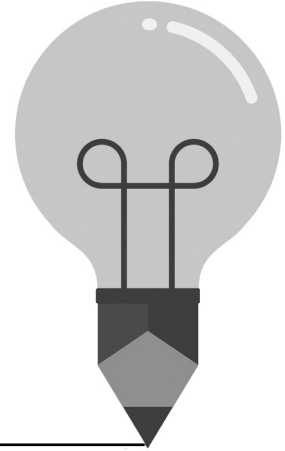


PUNCTUATION



End Marks—Stop Signs

End marks are *stop signs*. This means they “end” a sentence. There are three stop signs: a period, a question mark, and an exclamation point. **NOTICE: A comma is not an end mark.**

Periods end statements: I went to town.

Question marks end questions: May I please leave now?

Exclamation marks indicate surprise/excitement: Wow, what a game!

Commas

Commas are **separators**. Commas separate words and phrases. There are places commas go and places they do not go. Sometimes, students say they placed a comma in a certain place because it was where they “paused, took a breath, or felt it was time to use one.” None of these are comma rules!!

Rule 1: Commas separate items in a series. This could be a series of words or phrases. *Sentences cannot be separated by commas. This error is known as a comma splice. (See “Comma Splice Run-on.”) Again, commas only separate words and phrases. Place a comma before and/or after the last item in a series.

Examples: She bought groceries such as cereal, milk, and bread.
 I looked behind the chair, in the car, and on the shelf.

Rule 2: Commas separate introductory material from the sentence it introduces. Introductory material comes in three forms: a single word, a phrase, or a dependent clause. *If the word, phrase, or dependent clause is not introductory, then there is no comma. See the following examples.

Examples: Slowly, he walked down the street.
 He walked slowly down the street.
 On the table, I found my car keys.
 I found my car keys on the table.
 Because John was tall, he played basketball.
 John played basketball because he was tall.

Rule 3: Commas separate material from the sentence that is **not necessarily essential** to the sentence. These can be called “scoopables” because the nonessential material can be scooped/taken out without impacting the basic message in the sentence.

Examples: My teacher, Mrs. Jones, is gone today.
 We, of course, will be there.
 The children, after the storm stopped, played outside.
 I, too, can come to the party,
 My dog, Spot, is a spaniel.
 I, of course will be there.
 The man, the one with a beard, is my dad.

Rule 4: A comma, when placed with a conjunction, can connect two independent clauses to form a compound sentence.

Examples: I went to college, so I could prepare for a career.
 John and Jim went fishing, but Joe did not go.
 I can do this, or I can do that.
 The woman moved away, yet she misses her friends.
 The dog is big, and it scares the neighbors.
 The plant died, for it received no water.

Rule 5: A comma separates items in everyday situations.

Examples: Tom is from Reno, Nevada.
 I was born April 19, 1951.
 (if there is no date, there is no comma; see next example)
 I was born April 1951.
 You will be there, right? (called a tag question)
 My address is 123 Elm Street, Boise, Idaho 83686

Activities: Place commas where they belong in the following sentences. **NOTE:** Some sentences may be correct.

1. I bought several items at the store such as necessities like bread canned vegetables milk cereal cheese and meat.
2. Before we proceed with this we must take a vote.
3. The people were tired, for they had not taken a rest.
4. The band the best at the competition received first prize.
5. I want to become a doctor so I can help people.
6. We had better look at the map, before we take a wrong turn.
7. This is how it is done correct?
8. He lives at 25 Maple Drive Boise Idaho 83701.
9. The dog the one with the big bushy tale is mine.
10. She was born in May 1995.

Other Punctuation Marks

Other punctuation marks are the colon, semicolon, hyphen, dash, and parentheses. **These marks are used very sparingly and ONLY for specific reasons.** Each has a specific job.

Colon

The colon is an “introducer” and must be preceded by a full, informational sentence. The colon can introduce a list, a quote, or something special.

Examples:

1. For Thanksgiving dinner, I bought some unique foods: yams, cranberries, a turkey, and mincemeat pies.
2. P. T. Barnum, the famous circus owner of the 1800s, made the following quote: “There is a sucker born every minute.”
3. We have a new president of our class: John Jones.

Semicolon

A semicolon is a “connector.” A semicolon connects two independent clauses to form a compound sentence.

Example: John went fishing; he caught three fish.

Hyphen

A hyphen is a “unit maker.” Units are groups of words that cannot stand alone, such as numbers between 21 and 99.

The hyphen also makes multiple word descriptors (adjectives).

Examples of Units:

Numbers: *fifty-five, twenty-one, sixty-six, or ninety-nine*

Adjectives: *part-time job, multi-purpose room, or half-time student*

Dash

A dash is an “emphasizer.” A dash draws emphasis to something in the middle or at the end of a sentence.

Example: Place a dash here—not a comma for emphasis!
Everything that could go wrong—a flat tire, a dead battery, and a broken tail light—did go wrong.

Parentheses

Parentheses are the “enclosers.” Parentheses enclose supplemental or nonessential information.

Example: Hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and fries (the standard fare at most drive-thru restaurants) were cheaper at McDonalds.

****REMEMBER:** The colon, semicolon, hyphen, dash, and parentheses are **used only for specific purposes**. These punctuation marks **are very often misused** because students do not understand when, why, and where they are used.

Activities: Place correct punctuation marks where they belong.

1. The policeman displayed his badge, then he proceeded to ask questions of the suspect.
2. P. T. Barnum, the famous circus owner, stated the following about humanity, “There is a sucker born every minute.”
3. The man is twenty six years old.
4. This is an up to date schedule.
5. John Jones our new class president won the election today!
6. Only five people a very small number for a public meeting came to the city council to complain about the new rules.
7. He was very sick, therefore, he missed school.
8. Before we vote today, we all must think about this, are we better off today than we were four years ago?
9. There are only thirty five days left until we go on vacation.
10. John is a thrifty man, he saves all the money he can.