

Other Punctuation Rules

- A. If a sentence makes a statement, use a period. If a sentence asks a question, use a question mark. If a sentence expresses strong emotion, use an exclamation mark.

Ex: *Have you been handling frogs lately? I have. And ever since, I've been really jumpy. Boy does that make my mom hopping mad!*

- B. Use periods for abbreviations.

Ex: *Mr., Mrs., Tues., a.m., p.m.*

- C. Use a semicolon to connect two closely-related independent clauses and avoid a run-on sentence or a comma splice.

Ex: *He fell asleep in class; he had only two hours of sleep last night.*

***Also,** a semicolon can be used to separate items in a list containing internal commas.

Ex: *When I checked out the refrigerator, I found a chocolate cake, half-eaten; some canned tomato paste, which had a blue fungus growing on the top; and some possibly edible meat loaf.*

- D. Use a dash for an afterthought or a break in sentence construction.

Ex: *I ate tacos for dinner -- they are my favorite food. He ate the food -- or rather gulped it down -- in two minutes.*

***In this example,** commas or parentheses are also appropriate.

- E. Use a colon to show a list of things.

Ex: *I want the following for Christmas: a bike, a doll, and a gun.*

***Also,** you can use a colon to show emphasis, usually at the end of a sentence.

Ex: *Only one circumstance kept him in poverty: girl craziness.*

- F. Use an apostrophe to show possession.

Ex: *the cat's tail*

***Also** use an apostrophe to indicate a contraction.

Ex: *You're right about that.*

***Hint:** Possessive pronouns, however, need no apostrophes to indicate possession.

Ex: *His car is fast.*

***Also**, use apostrophes with A, B, C's, 1's and 2's, the class of '99, and the 1920's.

G. Use a hyphen for compound adjectives, which come before a noun.

Ex: *She was a nice-looking gal.*

***Hint:** Avoid using hyphens if the compound adjective comes after the noun

Ex: *The girl was nice looking.*

***Also**, if the second compound adjective is usually used as a noun instead of an adjective, then use the hyphen.

Ex: *My friend is two-faced.*

* **Remember**, don't use a hyphen to combine an adverb and an adjective.

Ex: *The exceptionally bright child reads well.*

H. **Don't** separate the subject and verb with a comma unless the sentence contains an interrupter.

***Use** commas on both sides of it.

Ex: *The reckless boy, who was caught driving 60 m.p.h. down Main Street, is my cousin.*

NOT : *The reckless boy who was caught driving 60 m.p.h. down Main Street, is my cousin.*

* **Use** commas on both sides of an interrupter or none at all.

I. Use quotation marks in the following situations:

* **Always** place periods inside quotation marks.

Ex: *He was a "cool dude."*

Ex: *John said, "He is a nice man."*

* Place commas, question marks and exclamation marks inside quotation marks at the end of a sentence. An exception occurs when the quote isn't asking the question.

Ex: *"He was nice," said John.*

Ex: *Did the coach say "We will win tonight"?*

* Commas after a quote introduction go before the quotation marks of a direct quote.

Ex: *John said, "School is boring."*

* Indirect quotes don't require quotation marks.

Ex: *Most experts say that fatty foods are dangerous.*

J. Use brackets for words already in parentheses inside a quote.

Ex: *"More than 2000 mm [nearly 80 inches] of rain falls annually in the Amazon rain forests."*

K. Underline titles of complete works (books, magazines, newspapers, plays, art works, etc.).

Ex: National Geographic often includes pictures of people from many different cultures.