

Unit 12

Punctuation

Objectives:

After the completion of this unit, you would be able to---

- explain what punctuation is.
- understand the importance of punctuation in language use.
- use appropriate punctuation marks.

Overview:

Lesson 1: *Punctuation*

Lesson 2: *The Rules of Punctuation*

Answer Key

Lesson 1: Punctuation



Punctuation means the right use of putting in points or stops in writing. We cannot do without punctuation marks in writing. They show when to slow down or stop, and they tell when to change directions. When you use punctuation marks correctly, your readers will have no trouble finding their way through what you have written.

Observe the following two excerpts, one punctuated properly, and the other is not:

- a. you silly idiot get off my head will you if you dont ill bash you when I get up from here you see if i dont.
- b. You silly idiot! Get off my head, will you? If you don't, I'll bash you – when I get up from here. You see if I don't!

Obviously, the second, punctuated version is easier to read, for it suggests where the speaker would pause or emphasize his words to get the necessary impact.

Sometimes punctuation is vital in showing the meaning intended by a writer. For example:

Woman without her man is a savage.

Woman! Without her, man is savage.

In this pair of sentences, one can see how the punctuation affects the whole meaning.

Lesson 2: The Rules of Punctuation.



The Full Stop/Period (.)

1. Most commonly, it divides sentence from sentence. Put a Full Stop/Period at the end of a sentence. For example –

I am going to cinema tonight. The movie begins at nine. Would you like to come with me?

Note that the full stop is replaced by a question mark at the end of a question. Similarly, an exclamation mark ends an exclamation.

2. Put a full stop after most abbreviations: Mr. Wood, Mrs. Moore, Nov. 12, A.M. Hon., F.R.C.S. , etc.

But, do not put period after some abbreviations: FBI, NBC, JFK, min, NFL, UMW, lb, kg, AL, CA, etc

3. Put a period inside quotation marks: He said, “Do not smoke here.”

The Comma (,)

Whenever the sense demands that the reader or speaker should make a slight pause, a comma should be used.

1. To separate items in a list:

We bought some shoes, gloves, a jersey, handkerchiefs, and a scarf.

2. To separate adjectives or adverbs when several are used:

The children were noisy, mischievous, inquisitive, unruly, and altogether something of a nuisance.

The snow fell silently, densely, almost unnoticed, in an even whiteness which soon covered the whole landscape.

3. To separate parts of date and addresses:

23rd July, 2016. Monday, 15 August, 2016.

James Roberts Esq.,
Woodstock Manor,
Ancoats Road,
Wolverton,
Surrey.

4. Use a comma to separate introductory phrases and clauses from the independent clause, particularly if the phrase or clause is long:

Although he had never played a guitar, he somehow managed to make beautiful music.

5. In pairs, to enclose words used ‘in apposition’ – words which follow a noun to tell you more about it:

This vase, a fine specimen of its kind, is now my property.

John Maxwell, Chairman of our company, has just arrived.

The dodo, a curious bird, is now extinct.

6. In pairs, to enclose words or phrases like: ‘however’, ‘well’ ‘by the way’, ‘to speak plainly’:

He admitted, however, that he was wrong. (However, he admitted that he was wrong.)

You told me, by the way, that you still had it.

7. To separate or enclose names of people being spoken to:

Please, Brother, will you help me?

Try to do it now, Rakib.

Thank you, Sir, for your advice.

David, will you please listen to me.

8. To separate words spoken as direct speech from the rest of a sentence:

My brother said, “That is just as it should be.”

“That is just as it should be,” said my brother.

9. In letters, after Dear Sir, Dear Mr. Jonh, etc., and after Yours faithfully, Yours sincerely, etc.
10. In all other cases, to separate parts of a sentence wherever a slight pause seems desirable.
Observe the following examples:

If it is fine tomorrow, I should like to go cycling.

Although we tried hard to win the game, we lost five runs.

My friend Hasan, whom you met last week at my party, has married today.

When I saw how ill he looked, I decided not to tell him of our plans, but he asked me about them, saying how interested he was, and so I had no alternative.

The Inverted Comma or Quotation Mark (“”)

These enclose all quotations or quoted speech-words written down exactly as spoken:

My sister said, “I cannot see how you can eat so much.”

The poem begins: “I wandered lonely as a cloud...”

Some modern usages prefer to use single quotation marks: ‘ _____ ’, but you are advised to use double quotation marks: “ _____ ”.

The Semicolon (;)

1. This is useful in longer sentences if you want to present several ideas which, though separate, might properly belong in one sentence:

You could wait for him here; on the other hand I could wait in your place; this would save you valuable time.

I have not read any of his novels; I know his plays, though.

2. Use a **semicolon** to join two sentences when the second sentence begins with a **transitional word** or **phrase** (also known as a *conjunctive adverb*).

Our appetite for new cars, the latest style of jeans, and a new brand of hairspray keeps growing; **therefore**, our economy keeps growing.

3. Use a semicolon to link two independent clauses:

To give a good party, you must consider the lighting; no one feels comfortable under the bright glare of fluorescent.

The Colon (:)

A colon simply means as follows. It will help you to think of the colon as having the meaning of ‘namely’ or ‘to state in detail’.

1. Use a colon when making a list:

There are four ingredients necessary to make a good party: music, lighting, food, and personality.

For camping you need; a tent, groundsheet, sleeping bag, and cooking equipment.

2. It introduces a quotation or a statement given as an example or enlargement of what has just been mentioned:

The poem begins: "Earth has not anything to show more fair."

His house became what one might expect after years of neglect: a battered, decrepit wreck.

The Note of Interrogation/Question Mark (?)

Any word, group of words, or sentence forming a question must be followed by this mark.

1. Use a question mark at the end of a question sentence.

Can you tell me your name?

Wherefore art thou, Romeo?

2. If the question is a quotation, put quotation marks after the question mark.

He asked, "May I go now?"

"How do I look?" she asked.

3. If the question is not part of the quotation, put the question mark after the quotation marks.

Do you believe in "death for death"?

What do you think of "No new taxes"?

Note: The Question Mark is not used after an indirect question. For example –

He asked me whether I had written my assignment.

The Note of Exclamation/Exclamation Mark (!)

Exclamation Marks are used for emphasis! Excitement! Surprise! For example –

Stop!

Get lost!

Wow, what a fine picture!

Dash (_____)

Dashes are a kind of optional punctuation – some people use them, others don't. Often you can use a comma or parenthesis instead of dashes. Dash is used –

1. To indicate an abrupt stop or change of thought; as –

If my father were alive – but why lament the past.

2. To resume a scattered subject or to show flattering speech; as –

Friends, companions, relatives – all deserted him.

"Yes – well – I would – only you see – it's not easy."

The Hyphen (-)

A hyphen separates compound words. A hyphen is shorter than a dash.

1. If the pair of words forms an adjective that comes before the noun, use a hyphen.
Well-known bird
First-class work
2. If the adjective pair comes after the noun, you don't need to use a hyphen.
His crimes are well known.
His work is always first class.
3. Use a hyphen for fractions acting as adjectives;
He drank one and two-thirds cans of Coca-Cola.
But not fractions acting as noun:
Two thirds of the people have gone home.
4. Use a hyphen to differentiate certain words:
He recollected his memories of 1971.
He re-collected the money.
She recovered from the flu.
She re-covered the sofa.

The Apostrophe (')

The apostrophe is used to show ownership.

Rana's father has come.

Mother's office ...

1. The apostrophe is used to show the omission of a letter or letters; as –
Don't e'er I've
2. To form plural of letters and figures, apostrophe is used; as –
Dot your *i's* and cut your *t's*.
You need to write 2 t's in the word 'written'.
3. If the plural noun doesn't end in –s, add an apostrophe and –s. For example-
The women's freedom
The bacteria's
The committee's decision
4. If the plural ends in –s, just add an apostrophe.
The babies' wears
The politicians' promise
5. If the word is a proper noun that ends in –s, add an apostrophe and an –s.
Yeats's poem
Ross's riddle
Chris's crisis

The Parenthesis/Bracket ()

Use parenthesis to enclose extra materials (explanation, asides, etc.) that are not basic to the meaning of the sentence but that would otherwise interrupt the flow of the sentence.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Democrat, New York) was the only person to be elected President four times.

He gained from Heaven (it was all he wished) a friend.

The Asterisk (*)

Asterisk is used to draw some special attention; and two or more asterisks are used to denote that some words or phrases or clauses have been intentionally left out.

Punctuation* is very important in writing.

The woman*** at last confessed the crime.

Exercise

Lesson 2:

1. Use appropriate punctuation marks in the following passage:

I came here yesterday from my village home he said why did you come I asked my mother sent me to you with this letter he replied how is your mother now I have not seen her for a long time I said

2. Why do you not go asked the eldest of the girls and mistress of the house Do you find your payment to little Then turning to her sisters she said Give him another dinner By Allah sweet ladies replied the porter You have paid me well enough my ordinary pay is but a few coppers It is about you that my heart is troubled How is it that you lived alone in this house with no man to attend you

Answer Key

1. "I came here yesterday from my village home," he said. "Why did you come?" I asked. "My mother sent me to you with this letter," he replied. "How is your mother? I have not seen her for a long time," I said.

2. "Why do you not go?" asked the eldest of the girls and the mistress of the house, "Do you find your payment too little?" Then, turning to her sisters, she said, "Give him another dinner." "By Allah, sweet ladies," replied the porter, "You have paid me well enough; my ordinary pay is but a few coppers. It is about you that my heart is troubled. How is it that you lived alone in this house with no man to attend you?"