

Self Study Programs: Punchy Punctuation




This module covers:

- Identifying key punctuation devices used in effective writing
- Demonstrating your understanding of correct punctuation




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Punchy Punctuation

<p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Full Stop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use at the end of a sentence • Use after abbreviations that end in lower case letters <p style="text-align: center;">Mr. and Dr. not USA or PhD</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Question Mark</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely used in academic writing • Avoid rhetorical questions - Where did it all go wrong? • Direct questions must be answered immediately <p>'So, what effect did the attack on the World Trade Centre have on American home security? The answer is two-fold . . .'</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Exclamation Mark</p>	<p>A sign of pleasure/surprise or to lend emphasis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never use in formal academic writing! • May be used in web-writing or social media writing (if it is informal)
 <p style="text-align: center;">Comma</p>	<p>1. Dates, addresses and numbers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence . . . • He lives at 104 Madeup Road, Smithfield, Queensland. • She won \$7,525,000 in the lottery. <p>2. Divides a list or series (nouns, adjectives)</p> <p>Try to ensure parallels (to keep the same pattern) in lists or series:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The CEO aspired to dominate the local, national and international market" • "We went to the airport by bus, to Sydney by plane and across the harbour by ferry" <p>If you can insert 'and' in between adjectives that modify the same word then use a comma:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The house had a spooky, neglected feel" <p>3. Simple sentences and commas</p> <p>Simple Sentences contain one main clause (control unit) with a subject, verb and object. There is no punctuation between the subject-verb-object unless there is a list of items (so, simple sentences don't usually have a comma).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"The manager stole a million dollars"</i> <p>4. Compound sentences and commas</p> <p>Compound Sentences contain two or more control units which could stand as sentences on their own. They are joined together with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS – for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Dancing is really good fun, and it is good exercise"</i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Comma (continued)</p>	<p><u>Common Problems:</u></p> <p>A. Comma Splice – when two control units are incorrectly joined together with just a comma. <i>“Dancing is really good fun, it is good exercise”</i></p> <p>B. Run-on/fused sentence - when the two control units are not separated. <i>“Dancing is really good fun it is good exercise”</i></p> <p>So, don’t forget, compound sentences need both a comma and a coordinating conjunction! (see also – section on semi-colons).</p> <p>5. Complex Sentences and commas</p> <p>Complex Sentences contains a control unit and at least one support unit. <i>“Because of a gambling debt, the manager embezzled a million dollars”</i></p> <p><u>Support Units</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contain additional (descriptive) information that is less important than the control unit • are sentence fragments (ie. cannot actually be a complete sentence/stand alone), eg. <i>“Because of a gambling debt”</i> • begin with a subordinating conjunction (although, because, since, when) or use a relative pronoun (who, which, that) to add on at the end • can be inserted in between the subject group and the verb group in a control unit with a pair of commas – avoid these constructs as they break up your subject-verb-object, eg. <i>“The manager, because of a gambling debt, embezzled a million dollars”</i> <p>Tip: Add support units after control units – get the important information up front. <i>The manager embezzled a million dollars because of a gambling debt.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">; Semi-colon</p>	<p>Semi-colons are used to separate parts of a compound sentence, which have an evident, logical relationship. The two control units are joined together with a semi-colon instead of a comma and conjunction. <i>“Increased taxes are one way to pay for programs; cost cutting also frees up money”</i></p> <p>Semi-colons can also be used to separate items in a series which contain a comma. <i>“The indictment involved Julie Smith, the CEO; Bob Hario, the Financial Controller; and Yvette Wallace, the Regional Manager”</i></p> <p>Tip: Semi-colons should be used sparingly for effect.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">● ● Colon</p>	<p>Colons indicate that a <i>series, statement</i> or <i>quotation</i> will follow at the end of a control unit. The second part elaborates upon, or explains, something about the first part.</p> <p><u>Series</u> <i>The business checked the following items for faults: printers, scanners, answering machines and mobile phones.</i></p> <p><u>Statement</u> <i>The accountant’s evaluation of their financial situation was blunt: bankrupt.</i></p> <p><u>Quotation</u> <i>The business magnate, Bill Gates, notes the importance of consumer feedback: “Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.”</i></p>

<p style="text-align: center;">()</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Brackets</p>	<p>Brackets in academic writing are used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acronyms <p><i>“The World Bank Group (WBG) offers loans, advice and resources to more than 100 developing countries”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directions <p><i>“The Foundation supported eight initiatives, which cost over three million dollars (see Figure 1)”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citations <p><i>The business magnate, Bill Gates (2010, p.109), noted the importance of consumer feedback: “Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning”</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dash</p>	<p>Dashes should be avoided in academic writing as they often denote an afterthought or a side comment.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“The manual – if you could call it that – was difficult to decipher”</i></p> <p>If the additional information is objective and important enough to note, then incorporate it into the sentence structure as a support unit with commas.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hyphen</p> 	<p>1. Hyphens are used to join parts of a word together.</p> <p>Compound words are formed when two words are joined together to form a compound fraction or a compound number:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>two-thirds, one-half OR twenty-one</i></p> <p>When two words are joined together to form a compound adjective or phrase to describe the noun that follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Bill Gates is a well-known business magnate.</i></p> <p>2. Prefixes and Hyphens</p> <p>Prefixes are used before the prefixations <i>ex-, non-, all-, self-</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>ex-manager, non-starter, all-encompassing, self-made</i></p> <p>Before capitalised words:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>un-Australian, trans-Atlantic, pro-Communist</i></p> <p>To prevent misreading:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>re-sign (to sign again) versus resign (to quit)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">’</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Apostrophe</p>	<p>Indicates ownership of a noun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singular nouns – add apostrophe before ‘s’ <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The CEO’s budget</i> (one CEO with one budget)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singular nouns that end in a soft ‘s’ - add apostrophe after ‘s’ <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The business’ store</i> (one business with one store)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plural nouns – add apostrophe after ‘s’ <p style="text-align: center;"><i>businesses’ employees</i> (multiple businesses with multiple employees) <i>employees, managers</i> (plural noun with no ownership – no apostrophe)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint possession – add apostrophe before ‘s’ of last noun <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Australia and America’s treaty</i> (two countries with a joint treaty)</p> <p><u>Important notes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractions are never used in academic writing – all words and numbers should be written in full, eg. Don’t = do not They’re = they are 70s = 1970s If you have placed an apostrophe before any letter other than an ‘s’, then you have probably created a contraction Possessive pronouns do not have an apostrophe <p style="text-align: center;"><i>its your their whose</i> <i>it’s (it is), you’re (you are), they’re (they are), who’s (who is)</i></p>

Not-so-Quick Quiz

1. Which one of the following full stop usages is correct for abbreviations that end in a capital letter?

- a) U.S.A.
- b) USA.
- c) USA

2. What types of punctuation should you avoid in academic writing?

- a) dashes
- b) exclamation marks
- c) question marks
- d) all of the above

3. What is the correct comma usage for the following date in a sentence structure?

The Great Depression began with the Wall Street Crash

- a) in, October 1929.
- b) in October, 1929.
- c) in October 1929.

4. Which sentence demonstrates the best example of parallel structure in a series?

- a) The canine, the cat and the falcon all cohabitated in peace.
- b) The canine, the feline and the falcon all cohabitated in peace.
- c) The canine, the feline and the avian all cohabited in peace.

5. Which sentence demonstrates the best example of parallel structure in a series?

- a) The obliging owner and the affable customer came to an agreement.

b) The owner who was obliging and the affable customer came to an agreement.

c) The obliging owner and the affably-natured customer came to an agreement.

6. Which one of these sentences applies the correct use, or omission, of a comma?

- a) The business had an outdated unsuccessful operational plan.
- b) The business had an outdated unsuccessful, operational plan.
- c) The business had an outdated, unsuccessful operational plan.

7. What type of sentence is the following?

After the Global Financial Crisis, many national governments were required to provide assistance to prevent bank closures.

- a) Simple
- b) Complex
- c) Compound

8. What type of sentence is the following?

The Global Financial Crisis devastated many economies, and national governments were required to provide assistance to prevent bank closures.

- a) Simple
- b) Complex
- c) Compound

9. Both of these sentences are flawed. Which one is a run-on sentence and which one is a comma splice?

- a) The Global Financial Crisis devastated many economies, national governments

were required to provide assistance to prevent bank closures.

- b) The Global Financial Crisis devastated many economies national governments were required to provide assistance to prevent bank closures.

10. Which one of these sentences has the correct use of a semi-colon?

- a) This system has an even greater capacity; it can hold 4.2 gigabytes of data.
- b) This system has an even greater capacity; and it can hold 4.2 gigabytes of data.

11. Which one of these sentences has the correct use of a colon?

- a) Production levels will depend upon: good weather conditions, low equipment repairs, and harmonious industrial relations.
- b) Production levels will depend upon three factors: good weather conditions, low equipment repairs, and harmonious industrial relations.

12. Which one of these sentences has the correct use of a bracket?

- a) The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) affected the world stock market.
- b) The GFC (Global Financial Crisis) affected the world stock market.
- c) The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) affected the world stock market (WSM).

13. Which words need to be hyphenated in the following sentence?

The well spoken manager had a notably charismatic effect on the excited crowd.

- a) well-spoken
- b) notably-charismatic
- c) excited-crowd

14. Where would you place the apostrophe in the sentence for singular nouns?

- a) The partners contract was considered null and void.
- b) The partner's contract was considered null and void.
- c) The partners' contract was considered null and void.

15. Where would you place the apostrophe in the sentence for plural nouns?

- a) The partners contracts' were considered null and void.
- b) The partner's contracts were considered null and void.
- c) The partners' contracts were considered null and void.

Excellent Editing

The following boxed paragraph has NO punctuation (!!). Punctuate the paragraph so it is easy to read.

punctuation is important because it helps make writing clear writing clearly is important as it is an important part of effective communication there are many types of punctuation that can be used such as commas full stops and semi colons it is important to edit an assignment before submitting it so that any errors in punctuation can be corrected indeed some people say that careful editing can raise an assignment almost one complete grade when editing it is useful to first read the assignment to make sure the content is well organised and easy to read and then to read it again a second time deliberately looking for any errors in punctuation or spelling or sentence construction

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