

Chapter 2 Punctuation

2. Commas

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of commas.
2. Use commas in sentences.

The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence, or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Take a look at some of the sentences below to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- ☐ Introductory word: Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- ☐ Lists: The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- ☐ Coordinating adjectives: He was tired, hungry, and late.
- ☐ Conjunctions in compound sentences: The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- ☐ Interrupting words: I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- ☐ Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters: The letter was postmarked December 8th, 1945.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Exercise 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Answer:

1. Suddenly, the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye, the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused, he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt, green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating, she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately, the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal, was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items

in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word and before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list adjectives as well as nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify, and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the sentences below.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Answer:

1. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet, uneventful, unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks, Todds, and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael, Nita, and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold, wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear, precise, delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause, followed by a conjunction, such as for, and, and but. For a full list of conjunctions, look in Chapter 2.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.

(While the presentation was scheduled for Monday, the weather delayed the presentation for four days.)

2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.

(He wanted a snack before bedtime, and ate some fruit).

3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.

(The patient is in the next room and I can hardly hear anything).

4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.

(We could go camping, and vacation at the beach).

5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.

(I want to get a better job, and I am talking courses at night).

6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.

(I cannot move forward on this project, and I cannot afford to stop on this project.)

7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.

(Patrice wants to stop for lunch, and we will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.)

8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.

(I've got to get this paper done, and I have class in ten minutes.)

9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

(The weather was clear yesterday, and we decided to go on a picnic.)

10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

(I have never dealt with this client before but I know Leonardo has worked with them, so let's ask Leonardo for his help).

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

Sidebar

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth. Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.

Sidebar

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mister Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Answers:

1. I asked my neighbors, the retired couple from Florida, to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt, his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor, Mister Alamut, drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon, unfortunately, which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner, but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden, our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex, hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, Greetings, and Letters

You will also use commas when you write the date in cover letters and emails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone. If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day, or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date, add a comma after the date.

Sidebar

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.
Her birthday is May 5th.
He visited the country in July 2009.
I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You will also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

Sidebar

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.
After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an email or a letter, you add a comma after greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after a word or phrase you put before your signature.

Sidebar

Hello,
I would like more information about your job posting.
Thank you,
Anita Al-Sayf
Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,
Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.
Sincerely,
Jack Fromont

Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
New Castle Maine 90342
Dear Mr. Timmons
Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the 5th. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.
Thank you
Alexa

Answer:

March 27, 2010
Alexa Marché,
14 Taylor Drive, Apt. 6
New Castle, Maine, 90342
Dear Mr. Timmons,

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the 5th. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.
Thank you,
Alexa

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the paragraphs below.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunchboxes limited edition books and hat pins at various points of his life. His current collection unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
 2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20th. In that time we need to gather all of our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any emails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
 3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
 4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include you contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you H.R. Department.
- Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Answer:

1. My brother, Nathaniel, is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunchboxes, limited edition books, and hat pins at various points of his life. His current collection, unusual bottles, has over fifty pieces. Usually, he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 20th. In that time we need to gather all of our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any emails, faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool, crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp, so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group, Garth, kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle, Raoul, and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result, no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15, 2010. In your submission letter, please include **your** contact information, the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10, but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you, H.R. Department.

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.
- ☐ Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- ☐ A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- ☐ A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word and is added before the last noun.
- ☐ A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.

- ☐ Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- ☐ Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- ☐ When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- ☐ When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- ☐ When you write a letter, you use commas in your greetings at the beginning and the end of your letter.

Key Terms

comma

A punctuation mark that tells the reader when to pause, or when a word is part of a list.

coordinating adjectives

A series of adjectives that come before the noun they describe.

interrupting words

Words or phrases that describe a noun, separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. Interrupters can come before or after the noun they describe.

3.2 Semicolons

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of semicolons.
2. Use semicolons in sentences.

The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

Sidebar

Correct (semicolon): Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

Choppy (period): Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

Incorrect (comma): Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list, when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in a list.

Sidebar

Correct (semicolons): The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; and red, green, and brown.

Incorrect (commas): The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, and red, green, and brown.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Answer:

1. I did not notice that you were in the office; I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese; roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds; there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident. (OK)
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple; green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk; the air is so refreshing.

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- ☐ Use a semicolon to separate items in a list, when those items already require a comma.

Key Term

semicolon (;)

A punctuation mark that indicates a pause and joins two independent clauses.

3.3 Colons

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of colons.
2. Use colons in sentences.

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Sidebar

Dear Hiring Manager:
To: Human Resources
From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

Sidebar

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.
I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce a Quote

You can use a colon to introduce a quote.

Sidebar

Mark Twain said it best: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

If a quote is longer than 40 words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because quotations longer than 40 words use indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

Sidebar

My father always loved Mark Twain’s words:
There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

Tip

Long quotations, which are 40 words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers. For more information about block quotations, see Chapter 11.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example, or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like such as or for example.

Sidebar

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.
Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from Hamlet: "To thine own self be true."

Another independent clause: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write OK.

1. Don't give up you never know what tomorrow brings.

(Don't give up: you never know what tomorrow brings.)

2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

(Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010; January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.)

3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

(Allow me to introduce myself: I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.)

4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

(Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store: by car, by bus, and by foot.)

5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

(Listen closely: you will want to remember this speech.)

6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

(I have lived in Sedona, Arizona; Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.)

7. The boss's message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.

(The boss's message was clear: Lateness would not be tolerated.)

8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.

(OK)

9. My little sister said what we were all thinking "We should have stayed home."

(My little sister said what we were all thinking: "We should have stayed home.")

10. Trust me I have done this before.

(Trust me I have done this before.)

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- ☐ Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

Key Term

colon (:)

A punctuation mark that is used to indicate a full stop. Colons can introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations.

3.4 Quotes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of quotes.
2. Use quotes in sentences.

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Sidebar

Direct quotation: Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Writing at Work

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well-acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentence:

- ☐ The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
- ☐ The client said, “He thought our manuscript was garbage.”

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word “garbage”? This is alarming! Or, has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client’s words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is “he” in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this. Neither sentence is grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you to write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person’s exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Sidebar

Beginning: Madison said, “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Middle: “Let’s stop at the farmers market,” Madison said, “to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

End: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner,” Madison said.

Speaker not identified: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote, even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed after commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Sidebar

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked, "When is lunch?"

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were "the next Picasso"?

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed, "Thanks for all of your hard work!"

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I "single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars"!

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotations (' ') to show a quotation within in a quotation.

Sidebar

Theresa said, "I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, 'No dogs allowed.'"

"When you say, 'I can't help it,' what exactly does that mean?"

"The instructions say, 'Tighten the screws one at a time.'"

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in book. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels are underlined.

Sidebar

"Annabelle Lee" is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The New York Times has been in publication since 1851.

Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

1. Yasmin said, I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.

(Yasmin said, "I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat.")

2. Where should we go? said Russell.

("Where should we go?" said Russell.)

3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.

(OK)

4. I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.

("I know," said Russell, "let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.")

5. Perfect! said Yasmin.

("Perfect!" said Yasmin.)

6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.

("Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem?" asked Russell.)

7. I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?

("I didn't!" exclaimed Yasmin. "Which poem?"

8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.

("The Road Not Taken," by Robert Frost Russell explained.)

9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?

("Oh!" said Yasmin, "Is that the one that starts with the line, "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?"

10. That's the one said Russell.

("That's the one" said Russell.)

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles.
- ☐ Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- ☐ Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Key Terms**quotation marks (“ ”)**

Punctuation marks that are used in pairs to enclose direct quotations and titles of short works.

direct quotation

An exact account of what someone said or wrote. Direct quotations must be enclosed in quotation marks.

indirect quotation

A restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

single quotation marks (‘ ’)

Punctuation marks that are always used in pairs to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

3.5 Apostrophes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of apostrophes.
2. Use apostrophes in sentences.

An apostrophe (') is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession, or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add 's.

Sidebar

Jen's dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog's leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess's sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s ('s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe ('). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and s ('s).

Sidebar

Plural noun that ends in s: The drummers' sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in s: The people's votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

Sidebar

I do not like ice cream.

I don't like ice cream.

<~?~CN: end of sidebar>

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don't. The apostrophe shows where the o in not has been left out.

Sidebar

We will see you later.

We'll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
she'll	she will
they'll	they will
you'll	you will

it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she's	she is, she has
there's	there is, there has
who's	who is, who has

Tip

Be careful not to confuse it's with its. It's is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun.

It's cold and rainy outside. = It is cold and rainy outside.

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words it is in a sentence. If it works, use the contraction it's.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Answer:

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her **mother's** eyes."
2. My **brother's** wife is one of my best friends.
3. I **couldn't** believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I **wouldn't** be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the **student's** responses were unique.
6. **Won't** you please join me for dinner tonight?

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Use apostrophes to show possession. Add 's to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s. Add ' to plural nouns that end in s.
- ☐ Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

Key Terms

apostrophe (')

A punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession, or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

contraction

A word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out.

3.6 Parentheses

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of parentheses.
2. Use parentheses in sentences.

Parentheses () are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Sidebar

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Answer:

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend (I am)?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar (unless you don't like sushi).
3. I was able to solve the puzzle (after taking a few moments to think about it).
4. Please complete the questionnaire (at the end of this letter).
5. Has anyone (besides) me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle (not underline) the correct answers.

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Parentheses enclose information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.
- ☐ Parentheses are always used in pairs.

Key Term

parentheses ()

Punctuation marks that are used in pairs to contain information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.

3.7 Dashes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of dashes.
2. Use dashes in sentences.

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash on a computer keyboard, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Sidebar

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all of the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Answer:

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer - short or long?
2. I don't know - I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what - I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend - if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all of the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate - intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Dashes indicate a pause in text.
- ☐ Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

Key Term

dash (—)

A punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis.

3.8 Hyphens

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of hyphens.
2. Use hyphens in sentences.

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens Between Two Adjectives that Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

Sidebar

The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.
My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.
My study group focused on preparing for the mid-year review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary, or, move the entire word to the next line.

Sidebar

My supervisor was concerned that the team meeting would conflict with the client meeting.

Key Takeaways

- ☐ Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- ☐ Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

Key Term

hyphen (-)

A punctuation mark that combines words that work together to form a single description. Use a hyphen to break a word across two lines of text.

Punctuation: End of Chapter Exercises

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write OK.

Commas

- a. The wedding will be July 13 2012.
- b. The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.
- c. The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.
- d. Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
- e. The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.
- f. The photography the catering and the music will all be friends.

Semicolons

- a. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.
- b. The flowers will either be roses, daisies, and snapdragons orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies.

Colons

- a. There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.
- b. They've finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.
- c. Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable.

Quotes

- a. The invitations said that the wedding would be "outdoor casual."
- b. "What exactly does 'outdoor casual' mean?" I asked the bride.
- c. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

Apostrophes

- a. On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.
- b. My brothers wife will make the arrangements.
- c. Shes a great party organizer.

Parentheses

- a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I've known her for 15 years.
- b. All of the details were perfect in my opinion.

Dashes

- a. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.
- b. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

Hyphens

- a. The groom danced with his new mother in law.
- b. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

2. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.

- a. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.
- b. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.
- c. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.
- d. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!
- e. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.
- f. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.
- g. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.
- h. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.
- i. Arent gardens wonderful?
- j. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?

3. The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

May 18 2011

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have 13 years of experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for 2 years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don't have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

4. Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence.

I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all of the books in the womans office she must have had 100 books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an email to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing Application

Review some of the recent or current assignments you have completed for school or work. Look through recent business and personal emails. Does your work contain any errors in punctuation? Correct the errors and compile a list of the types of errors you are correcting (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, etc.). Use this list as a reference for the types of punctuation marks that you should review and practice.

If you do not find many errors—great! You can still look for ways to add interest to your writing by using dashes, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to create a variety of sentence lengths and structures.

Answers:

Commas

- a. The wedding will be **July 13, 2012**.
- b. The date, **by the way**, is the anniversary of the day that they met.
- c. The **groom, the bride, and** their parents are all planning the event.
- d. **Actually**, all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
- e. The bride is a **baker, so** she will be making the wedding cake herself.
- f. The **photography, the catering, and** the music will all be friends.

Semicolons

- a. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding **services; they** are lucky to have such talented friends.
- b. The flowers will either be roses, daisies, and **snapdragons; orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies**.

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- a. There will be three colors for the **wedding:** white, black, and gold.
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Quotes

- a. The invitations said that the wedding would be "outdoor casual." **(OK)**
- b. "What exactly does 'outdoor casual' mean?" I asked the bride. **(OK)**
- c. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground. **(OK)**

Apostrophes

- a. On the day of the wedding, **we're** going to rent a limo.
- b. My **brother's** wife will make the arrangements.
- c. **She's** a great party organizer.

Parentheses

- a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever (**and I've known her for 15 years**).
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Dashes

- a. Everyone danced at the wedding (**except my mother**).
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Hyphens

- a. The groom danced with his new **mother-in-law**.
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- e. You should see the birds that are attracted to the **garden; hummingbirds**, finches, robins, and sparrows.
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Sample Answer:

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Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Sample Answer:

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Answers will vary.