

GRAMMAR

Punctuation Basics

. period	? question mark	! exclamation point	; semicolon
, comma	-- dash	- hyphen	: colon
“ single quotation mark	“” quotation mark	() parentheses	... ellipses

Periods, Question Marks, and Exclamation Points mark the end of sentences.

Examples: *Prices of stocks and bonds fluctuate.*
Do you find reading textbooks difficult?
You got a great price for that dress!

Commas separate elements -- clauses, phrases, and words -- within sentences.

Examples: *Paul got divorced recently, but he is getting married again soon.*
While sugar is sweet, vinegar is sour.
My grandmother has always been kind, helpful, and interested.

Semicolons show that two independent clauses are closely related.

Examples: *The storm caused severe damage; many people were left homeless.*
It rained all night; however, our basement didn't flood.

Colons can be used after an independent clause to highlight words that follow.

Examples: *Mary was an unattractive child: pale, awkward, and withdrawn.*
Bob announced: "Jazz is an American creation that has become popular."

Dashes are used for emphasis, drama, and abrupt shifts in mood. They are informal.

Examples: *The door was locked -- or so we thought.*
Only one person -- the director-- can hire or fire.

Hyphens are used primarily to link words. They cannot combine adverbs.

Examples: *self-esteem* (compound noun)
old-fashioned (compound adjective)
twenty-one or 13-year-old (numbers that are written out or modify)
anti-French (prefixes that precede proper nouns)

Quotation Marks are used to demonstrate dialogue or placed around direct quotes.

Examples: *“We will celebrate with our friends another time,” said Kim.*
 According to the author, “Most students want to do well.”

Single Quotation Marks are used to show a quote inside another quote.

Examples: *“The detective spoke to the room, ‘The culprit is one of you!’”*
 “‘It’s about time,’ smiled Shante Wolfe, 21, as she left the courthouse in
 Montgomery with partner Tori Sisson.

Ellipses are used to show that something was removed from inside a direct quote.

Examples: *“Just hours before the Supreme Court’s decision, Alabama’s chief justice*
 had already ... [pit] state’s rights against federal rulings.”
 “This is not the first time that Moore ... has endorsed defying a federal
 judge’s order.”

Parentheses are used in formal writing to indicate citation information. Informal writing sometimes uses parentheses to indicate interrupting information.

Examples: *“We will celebrate with our friends another time,” said Kim (Barnes).*
 I will be a student at American University (I hope) in the fall.