



A Brief Guide to Punctuation

Punctuation marks are important because they are used to help add emotion and clarity to any kind of writing. They must be incorporated within every sentence so that your readers can clearly understand what you are trying to say.

Question Mark (?)

The **question mark** is used at the end of a sentence and indicates that a question is being asked. There are two types of questions you can ask. There is the **direct question** (an obvious question that gets straight to the point) **which can only end with a question mark** and the **indirect question** (question or statement that is used when we want to sound polite/a question that is embedded within the sentence) **which can either end with a question mark or a period.**

- **Direct Question:** Do you like dogs?
- **Direct Question:** Where's the car parked?
- **Indirect Question:** My mom had asked me whether or not I wanted to go out to lunch.
- **Indirect Question:** I wonder if Daisy would ever tell Tom that she loved Gatsby more.
- **Indirect Question:** Could you please tell me where Navy Pier is located?



Semicolon (;)

The **semicolon** is used to both separate and combine two independent/main clauses within a sentence. An **independent clause** (or the main clause) is a clause **that can stand by itself as its own sentence**. A **dependent clause** is a clause that provides additional information to the independent clause, but **it can't stand on its own as a sentence**.

➔ **Example :** I planted flowers because I like flowers.

Notice how the statement "I planted flowers" can stand on its own as a sentence. **It is the independent clause**, which means that it has a **subject, a verb and is a complete thought**. If you look at the statement "because I like flowers," you'll see that it can't stand on its own, so **it is the dependent clause**, which means it has a **subject and a verb, but it doesn't express a complete thought**. It adds information but it doesn't really need to be there. **Semicolons** are used to only separate or combine two **independent clauses** (or **sentences that have a subject, a verb and a complete thought**).

➔ **Example:** A deer jumped over the bushes in the forest; the wolf followed it closely.

➔ **Example:** Dina studied really hard in order to get an A on her math test; she didn't like hearing that Marcos didn't even try to study.



Period (.)

The **period** is used at the end of a sentence to indicate that the sentence has ended.

- **Example:** I went to the store to buy some coffee creamer .
- **Example:** Before we entered the haunted house, we made sure to turn our flashlights on .

Exclamation Point (!)

The exclamation point is used to show strong emotion (like anger, astonishment, fear, or happiness), emphasis (or intensity) and loudness within a sentence or dialogue.

- **Example:** Hey, look out for that charging hippo !
- **Example:** “Get out of my room!” cried the misunderstood teenager.

Colon (:)

The **colon** is used to introduce a list, a quote, or an explanation (extra information) to the subject of the sentence.

- **Example:** My mom wanted me to get three things from the grocery store : milk, eggs, and sour cream.
- **Example:** After silencing the overly-emotional woman, Judge Judy sharply announced the verdict: “judgment for the plaintiff in the amount of fifty thousand dollars.”
- **Example:** Wanted: a writing instructor who has knowledge of grammar.

Quotation Marks (“...”)

The **quotation marks** are used to indicate dialogue within a text or to indicate when a text is being quoted.

- **Example:** “I forgot to read Chapters 1 and 3,” said Mark. “Can I make up the homework some other time?”
- **Example:** The boy said to himself, “But all that I’ve noticed, except my own two feet, was a horse and wagon on Mulberry Street.”
- **Example:** He states “I do not like green eggs and ham. I do not like them, Sam-I-am.”



Further Assistance: This resource is available at lewisuwritingcenter.wordpress.com. For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library, or call 815-836-5427.

Sources Consulted: oxforddictionaries.com, study.com, thepunctuationguide.com, grammar-monster.com, enhancedlearning.com.