

Punctuation Rules

SECTION 1: END-MARK PUNCTUATION

1. Use a period (.) for the end punctuation of a sentence that makes a statement. (*Mom baked us a cake.*)
2. Use a question mark (?) for the end punctuation of a sentence that asks a question. (*Are you going to town?*)
3. Use an exclamation point (!) for the end punctuation of a sentence that expresses strong feeling. (*That bee stung me!*)
4. Use a period (.) for the end punctuation of a sentence that gives a command or makes a request. (*Close the door.*)

SECTION 2: COMMAS TO SEPARATE TIME WORDS

5. Use a comma between the day of the week and the month and day. (*Friday, July 23*) Use a comma between the day and year. (*July 23, 2009*)
6. Use a comma after the year when the complete date is used in the middle of the sentence. (*We spent July 23, 2004, with Grandmother.*) **Note:** when just the month and the year appear in a sentence, no comma is required. (*We leave in May 2006 for our first vacation.*)

SECTION 3: COMMAS TO SEPARATE LOCATION WORDS

7. Use a comma to separate the city from the state (or country) or route numbers from the street address (or box number). (*I will go to Dallas, Texas. He is from Paris, France. Rt. 2, Box 55 Rt. 4, Smokey Lane*)
8. Use a comma to separate the state or country from the rest of the sentence when the name of the state or country follows the name of a city. (*We flew to Dallas, Texas, in June. We flew to Paris, France, in July.*)

SECTION 4: COMMAS TO MAKE MEANINGS CLEAR

9. Use a comma to separate words or phrases in a series. (*We had soup, crackers, and milk.*)
10. Use a comma **after** an introductory word, an introductory prepositional phrase, or an introductory clause. (*Oh, I see. In the morning, the ship will dock. If you go, I will go.*) (Other introductory words: *well, today, now, yes, no, so*) Use a comma **before** the conjunction in a compound sentence and before *too* when it means “also”. (*Jim mowed the yard, and Larry raked the leaves. I want a brownie, too.*)
11. Use commas to set off most appositives. An appositive is a word, phrase, title, or degree used directly after another word to explain or rename it. (*Sue, my friend, likes to draw. My brother, Tim, is working today.*)
12. Use commas to separate a noun of direct address (the name of a person directly spoken to) from the rest of the sentence. (*Mom, do you want some tea?*)

SECTION 5: PUNCTUATION IN GREETINGS AND CLOSINGS OF LETTERS

13. Use a comma (,) after the salutation (greeting) of a friendly letter. (*Dear Sam,*)
14. Use a comma (,) after the closing of any letter. (*Yours truly,*)
15. Use a colon (:) after the salutation greeting) of a business letter. (*dear Madam:*)

SECTION 6: PERIODS

16. Use a period after most abbreviations or titles that are accepted in formal writing. (*Mr., Ms., Dr., Capt., St., Ave., St. Louis, etc.*) (Note: *These abbreviations should not be used alone. They should be used with a proper noun.*) In the abbreviations or acronyms of many well-known organizations or words, periods are not required. (*USA, GM, TWA, GTE, AT&T, TV, AM, FM, GI, etc.*)
17. Use a period after initials. (*C. Smith, D.J. Brewton, Thomas A. Jones, etc.*)
18. Place a period after Roman numerals, Arabic numbers, and letters of the alphabet in an outline. (*II., IV., 5., 25., A., B., etc.*)

SECTION 7: APOSTROPHES

19. Form a contraction by using an apostrophe in place of a letter or letters that have been left out. (*I'll, he's, isn't, wasn't, can't, etc.*)
20. Form the possessive of singular and plural nouns by using an apostrophe. (*boy's football, boys' football, child's football, children's football, etc.*)
21. Form the plurals of letters, symbols, numbers, and signs with an apostrophe and s ('s). (*9's, B's, b's, etc.*)

SECTION 8: UNDERLINING

22. Use underlining for writing the titles of ships, books, magazines, newspapers, motion pictures, full-length plays, works of art, and long musical compositions. (Our newspaper is the Gazette.) (*Titanic, Charlotte's Web, Reader's Digest, Macbeth, etc.*) These titles may also be italicized instead of underlined. (Our newspaper is the *Gazette*) (*Titanic, Charlotte's Web, Reader's Digest, Macbeth, etc.*)

SECTION 9: QUOTATIONS

23. Use quotation marks around titles or book chapters, magazine articles, short stories and plays, essays, single poems, television and radio programs, songs, and short pieces of music. (*Do you like to sing the song "America" in music class?*)
24. Use quotation marks at the beginning and end of the speaker's words to separate what the speaker said from the rest of the sentence. Since the quotation tells what is being said, it should always have quotation marks around it.
25. Do not use quotation marks to set off explanatory words, the words that tell who is speaking. (*Fred said, "I'm here."*) (**Fred said** is explanatory and should not be set off with quotation marks.)
26. Use a new paragraph to indicate a change of speaker.
27. When a speaker's speech is longer than one paragraph, use quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph and at the end of the last paragraph of that speaker's speech.

28. Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation. (*“My bear says ‘I love you’ four different ways,” said little Amy.*)
29. Use a period at the end of explanatory words that come at the end of a sentence.
30. Use a comma to separate a direct quotation from the explanatory words.