

Common Punctuation Marks

The primary function of punctuation marks is for the reader to most effectively understand the information presented.



Periods are used at the end of a sentence or abbreviation.

Dumbledore told Harry that words are the most inexhaustible form of magic.

Mrs. Mr. Dr. a.m.



Exclamation Points are used to show excitement or a command.

Do not move from that spot!

Good to see you!



Question Marks are used at the end of a question.

Would you like anything from the trolley?

How are you today?



Apostrophes serve several purposes. They show possession. They also show omission of letters in contractions.

A student's paper

Dolores' teacups

Can't Won't He's You're



Quotation Marks surround words spoken aloud and indicate an article title, chapter in a book, and the name of a short story, song, or poem.

"It's a hot day," Sally said.

"The Raven"

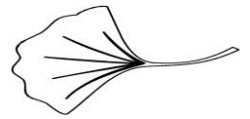
"The Wheels on the Bus"



Colons are used at the end of a complete statement to introduce a list, a long, block quotation, or an explanation.

We will need the following items: sunscreen, towels, and a change of clothes.

There are two major events that happen for Thanksgiving: The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the National Dog Show.



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Semi-Colons are used between two complete sentences to show a relationship. They are also used instead of commas when listing items that are long or contain commas.

*The hurricane caused record flooding for the state;
it also knocked out power for millions.*

We visited Miami, FL; Aspen, CO; and Reno, NV.

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Dashes signal a phrase that is longer than a comma.

*Some of you — I won't mention you by
name — cheated on this test.*

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Hyphens connect two words that act as a single unit describing a noun

I admire her well-rounded personality.

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Parentheses set off extra information from the rest of the sentence.

*The guy at the Hamburger House (my favorite
place to eat) asked me out on a date.*

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Ellipses within a direct quote indicates omitted words.

*"Sometimes at night Ariene would get out of
bed and begin to wander...she would slip out
from beneath the covers and begin to walk
around in the dark" (McCrumb 190).*

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Commas serve a specific purpose in allowing the reader to best understand the text that is written.

See the separate **Comma Handout** for all of the many roles of the comma.