Punctuation

● Period

A **period** (.) is used at the end of a sentence, unless the sentence is a question or an exclamation:

➤ *We went shopping.*
➤ *He tried to go.*

It is also used after an abbreviation:

➤ *Mr. Smith   Main St.   etc.   a.m.*

❓ Question mark

A **question mark** (?) is used at the end of a direct question:

➤ *How old are you?*
➤ *"When did they go?" Todd asked.*

It is not used after an indirect question:

➤ *Todd asked when they went.*

❗ Exclamation point

An **exclamation point** (!) is used with sentences that express strong emotion, such as surprise, excitement, or shock:

➤ *I can't believe it!*
➤ *That's wonderful!*

It is also used after an exclamation:

➤ *Bye!   Ouch!*

❟ Comma

A **comma** (,) separates items in a series:

➤ *I can speak English, Spanish, and Italian.*
➤ *Do you want coffee, tea, or orange juice?*
➤ *She was a tall, slim, beautiful woman.*

Commas are also used to separate different parts of a sentence:

➤ *He wanted to go, but he didn't have time.*
➤ *Although she is small, she is very strong.*

They appear before or around extra information in a sentence:

➤ *They don't like our dog, which barks all day.*
➤ *Michael Jackson, the American pop star, was famous all over the world.*

A comma also usually comes before or after a quotation:

➤ *David said, "I'll see you Saturday."*
➤ *"I'll see you Saturday," David said.*

It goes before or after a name when a person is being spoken to directly:

➤ *Stuart, would you like to go?*
➤ *I'm sorry, Jess.*

Commas also separate cities and towns from states:

➤ *Des Moines, Iowa*
➤ *Juneau, Alaska*

❘ Colon

A **colon** (:) is used to introduce explanations, long quotations, or a series:

➤ *She had three pets: a dog, a cat, and a horse.*

It can also introduce a quotation:

➤ *As Thomas Jefferson said: "All men are born equal."*

❘ Semicolon

A **semicolon** (;) is used to separate two contrasting parts of a sentence:

➤ *Humans use moral judgment; animals do not.*

It is also used in a series that has commas in it:

➤ *The menu featured hamburger, potato, and carrot casserole; and pecan pie.*

🛈 Apostrophe

An **apostrophe** (') shows that one or more letters are missing in a short form:

➤ *don't* (= do not)
➤ *he's* (= he is *or* he has)
➤ *I'm* (= I am)
➤ *they'd* (= they had *or* they would)
➤ *they're* (= they are)
➤ *we've* (= we have)

It also shows that a person or thing belongs to someone:

➤ *Kerri's car*
➤ *Robin's sister*
➤ *James's teacher or James' teacher*

The apostrophe goes after the "s" if the noun is plural:

➤ *the boy's room* (= one boy)
➤ *the boys' room* (= two or more boys)

🛈🛈 Quotation Marks

Quotation marks (" ") are used to show what someone said:

➤ *"Let's see a movie," Roger suggested.*

They also show thoughts that are presented like speech:

➤ *"I should leave now," she thought.*

Quotations marks are also used around the titles of essays, songs, poems, etc.:

➤ *They always play "The Star-Spangled Banner" before baseball games.*

They are also used to draw attention to a word or phrase that is intended to be ironic:

➤ *The "new" bride was recently married – to her seventh husband.*

➖ Hyphen

A **hyphen** (-) connects two or more ideas that form one idea:

➤ *a twelve-year-old boy*
➤ *a well-known actor*

It joins a prefix to a word that begins with a capital letter:

➤ *anti-European   pro-American*

A hyphen is also used with compound numbers:

➤ *ninety-nine   twenty-seven*

The hyphen is used to divide a word at the end of a line:

➤ *I had known Kathleen ever since we were child-ren, and we were very close.*

➖ Dash

A **dash** (–) separates a word or phrase from the rest of the sentence. It is often used near the end of a sentence to sum up or emphasize an idea:

➤ *I lost my keys, forgot my homework, and missed class – it was an awful day.*

It can also be used before and after a phrase that gives extra information:

➤ *I ran into her in – of all places – Italy.*

A dash also shows that an idea has been interrupted in the middle of a sentence or thought:

➤ *If only she would love me, I would – Oh, what's the use? It will never happen.*

🛈 Parentheses

Parentheses ( ) separate extra information from the rest of the sentence:

➤ *The recipe calls for 1 pound (450 grams) of flour.*
➤ *Tony (the smallest boy in class) was hurt playing football.*

Parentheses are often used around numbers and letters in sentences, especially with lists or choices:

➤ *If you had a choice, would you rather live in (a) the U.S.A., (b) Canada, (c) China, or (d) Italy?*