



Daffodil International School (EV)

Class: VIII

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Handout on Punctuation Marks

One of the most important parts of written English is punctuation. The most important rule to remember is that punctuation is there to help the writer make their meaning clearer.

When we speak, we use intonation, pauses, body language to help make our listeners understand what we want to say. When we write, we use punctuation for the same purpose.

When to use punctuation, and which type to use, can be confusing; here we look briefly at each example.

Types of Punctuation: The table below lists the types of punctuation used in English. It shows what each punctuation mark looks like and explains its purpose in a sentence.

| Mark | Symbol | Purpose |
|------------------|--------|---|
| Full Stop | . | Called a period in the US, the full stop marks the end of a sentence. It suggests a long pause in the writing. |
| Comma | , | A comma has two purposes; it can break up a sentence with a short pause between phrases and clauses, or be used to separate items in a list. |
| Question Mark | ? | This ends a sentence that is a question. |
| Exclamation Mark | ! | This is a way of showing that the sentence has drama, for example, surprise, anger, annoyance. |
| Colon | : | Two uses for a colon. It is used to introduce a list, quotation or, sometimes, speech. |
| Semi Colon | ; | A semi colon can be used in two ways. It separates items in a list, where each item is made up from several words. It works to show a pause in a sentence which is greater than a comma, but less than a full stop. |
| Apostrophe | ' | There are two, unrelated, apostrophes. The Possessive Apostrophe demonstrates when one noun belongs to another. |

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|--------------|---|---|
| | | The Contraction Apostrophe is used to show when letters are missed out. |
| Speech Marks | “ | These are used to show when words are either directly said, or directly quoted. Speech marks can be single or double. |
| Hyphen | – | These are used to create a noun made up of two parts. They are gradually diminishing in use. |

More Detail and Examples with Punctuation Marks:

1. Full Stop, Question Mark and Exclamation Mark

We cheered on our team at the football stadium.

Who won the game?

They won at last!

These three punctuation marks are, along with the ellipses, **sentence enders**. A sentence is a unit of meaning. It can be as small as one word (a sentence with special emphasis, for example: *The family enjoyed my apple pie*. Phew. Here, relief is indicated by the one word ‘Phew.’; with an **exclamation mark**, surprise would be indicated. A **question mark** would indicate that the audience has doubt about the outcome. It can be seen that punctuation marks which end sentences are there to help us understand the meaning intended by the writer.

2. Comma

We need to buy apples, flour, sugar and butter to make our apple pie.

In a list, a **comma** is used to separate each item except for the final two, which are usually separated with the connective ‘and’.

3. Colon

I heard the commentator say: ‘Goaaaaaallll!’

Introducing a quote or speech is a technical use of the **colon**.

I took my umbrella to the game: I did not want to get wet.

Separating two clauses is for effect, to emphasise meaning. The colon introduces a pause into the sentence, which in turn, adds emphasis to the second half of the sentence.

4. Semi Colon

When we make our ice cream we need: some vanilla pods or essence; a tub of fresh, double cream; some caster sugar; four medium eggs and a pint of milk.

The **semi colon** is rarely used for importance, but adds clarity to a list.

I took my umbrella; the forecast was for rain.

When separating two clauses, because the pause is shorter than for a colon, the second half does not carry additional importance.

5. Hyphen

Thanks to their win, the team's self-confidence grew.

The **hyphen** is another mark beginning to become dismissed. It is used when two separate words are combined to create a noun. However, a quick look in Word spellchecker shows that increasingly words can be written with or without the hyphen.

Punctuation is a terrific tool. It brings the written word to life and helps to communicate writers' meanings and intentions. Mostly, though, punctuation should be used to help communicate what we want to say.