

Punctuation

17 The comma

The comma was invented to help readers. Without it, sentence parts can collide into one another unexpectedly, causing misreadings.

CONFUSING If you cook Elmer will do the dishes.

CONFUSING While we were eating a rattlesnake approached our campsite.

Add commas in the logical places (after *cook* and *eating*), and suddenly all is clear. No longer is Elmer being cooked, the rattlesnake being eaten.

Various rules have evolved to prevent such misreadings and to guide readers through complex grammatical structures. According to most experts, you should use a comma in the following situations.

17a Before a coordinating conjunction joining independent clauses

When a coordinating conjunction connects two or more independent clauses—word groups that could stand alone as separate sentences—a comma must precede it. There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English: *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*.

A comma tells readers that one independent clause has come to a close and that another is about to begin.

- Nearly everyone has heard of love at first sight,
but I fell in love at first dance.

EXCEPTION: If the two independent clauses are short and there is no danger of misreading, the comma may be omitted.

The plane took off and we were on our way.

CAUTION: Do *not* use a comma to separate compound elements that are not independent clauses. See page 71.

17b After an introductory word group

Use a comma after an introductory clause or phrase. A comma tells readers that the introductory word group

has come to a close and that the main part of the sentence is about to begin. The most common introductory word groups are adverb clauses, prepositional phrases, and participial phrases.

- ▶ When Strom Thurmond ran for president in 1948,
he was a staunch segregationist.
- ▶ Near a small stream at the bottom of the canyon,
we discovered an abandoned shelter.
- ▶ Buried under layers of younger rocks,
the earth's oldest rocks contain no fossils.

EXCEPTION: The comma may be omitted after a short clause or phrase if there is no danger of misreading.

In no time we were at 2,800 feet.

17c Between items in a series

Use a comma between all items in a series, including the last two.

- ▶ Bubbles of air, leaves, ferns, bits of wood,
and insects are often found trapped in amber.

Although some writers view the comma between the last two items as optional, most experts advise using it because its omission can result in ambiguity or misreading.

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17d Between coordinate adjectives

Use a comma between coordinate adjectives, those that each modify a noun separately.

- Patients with severe, irreversible brain damage should not be put on life support systems.

Adjectives are coordinate if they can be connected with *and*: *severe and irreversible*.

CAUTION: Do not use a comma between cumulative adjectives, those that do not each modify the noun separately.

Three large gray shapes moved slowly toward us.

Adjectives are cumulative if they cannot be connected with *and*. It would be very odd to say *three and large and gray shapes*.

17e To set off a nonrestrictive element

A *restrictive* element restricts the meaning of the word it modifies and is therefore essential to the meaning of the sentence. It is not set off with commas. A *nonrestrictive* element describes a word whose meaning already is clear. It is not essential to the meaning of the sentence and is set off with commas.

RESTRICTIVE

For camp the children needed clothes *that were washable*.

NONRESTRICTIVE

For camp the children needed sturdy shoes, *which were expensive*.

If you remove a restrictive element from a sentence, the meaning changes significantly, becoming more general than intended. The writer of the first sample sentence does not mean that the children needed clothes in general. The meaning is more restricted: The children needed *washable* clothes.

If you remove a nonrestrictive element from a sentence, the meaning does not change significantly. Some meaning is lost, to be sure, but the defining characteristics of the person or thing described remain the same as before. The children needed *sturdy shoes*, and these happened to be expensive.

Elements that may be restrictive or nonrestrictive include adjective clauses, adjective phrases, and appositives.

Adjective clauses. Adjective clauses, which usually follow the noun or pronoun they describe, begin with a relative pronoun (*who, whom, whose, which, that*) or a relative adverb (*when, where*). When an adjective clause is nonrestrictive, set it off with commas; when it is restrictive, omit the commas.

NONRESTRICTIVE CLAUSE

- ▶ A 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, which killed 146 sweatshop workers, led to reforms in working conditions.

RESTRICTIVE CLAUSE

- ▶ A corporation that has government contracts must maintain careful personnel records.

NOTE: Use *that* only with restrictive clauses. Many writers use *which* only with nonrestrictive clauses, but usage varies.

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Adjective phrases. Prepositional or verbal phrases functioning as adjectives may be restrictive or nonrestrictive. Nonrestrictive phrases are set off with commas; restrictive phrases are not.

NONRESTRICTIVE PHRASE

- ▶ The helicopter, with its 100,000-candlepower spotlight illuminating the area, circled above.

RESTRICTIVE PHRASE

- ▶ One corner of the attic was filled with newspapers, dating from the turn of the 1920s.

Appositives. An appositive is a noun or pronoun that re-names a nearby noun. Nonrestrictive appositives are set off with commas; restrictive appositives are not.

NONRESTRICTIVE APPOSITIVE

- ▶ Darwin's most important book, *On the Origin of Species*, was the result of many years of research.

RESTRICTIVE APPOSITIVE

- ▶ The song "Fire It Up" was blasted out of amplifiers ten feet tall.

17f To set off transitional and parenthetical expressions, absolute phrases, and contrasted elements

Transitional expressions. Transitional expressions serve as bridges between sentences or parts of sentences. They include conjunctive adverbs such as *however*, *therefore*, and *moreover* and transitional phrases such as *for example* and *as a matter of fact*. For a more complete list, see page 73.

When a transitional expression appears between independent clauses in a compound sentence, it is preceded by a semicolon and usually followed by a comma.

- ▶ Minh did not understand our language; moreover, he was unfamiliar with our customs.

When a transitional expression appears at the beginning of a sentence or in the middle of an independent clause, it is usually set off with commas.

- ▶ As a matter of fact, American football was established by fans who wanted to play a more organized game of rugby.
- ▶ Natural foods are not always salt free; celery, for example, contains more sodium than most people would imagine.

Parenthetical expressions. Expressions that are distinctly parenthetical, interrupting the flow of a sentence, should be set off with commas.

- ▶ Evolution, so far as we know, does not work this way.

Absolute phrases. An absolute phrase, which modifies the whole sentence, should be set off with commas.

- ▶ Our grant having been approved, we were at last able to begin the archaeological dig.

Contrasted elements. Sharp contrasts beginning with words such as *not* and *unlike* are set off with commas.

- ▶ The Epicurean philosophers sought mental, not bodily, pleasures.

17g To set off nouns of direct address, the words *yes* and *no*, interrogative tags, and mild interjections

- ▶ Forgive us, Dr. Spock, for spanking Brian.
- ▶ Yes, the loan will probably be approved.
- ▶ The film was faithful to the book, wasn't it?
- ▶ Well, cases like this are difficult to decide.

17h To set off direct quotations introduced with expressions such as *he said*

- ▶ Naturalist Arthur Cleveland Bent remarked, “In part the peregrine declined unnoticed because it is not adorable.”

17i With dates, addresses, titles

Dates. In dates, the year is set off from the rest of the sentence with commas.

- ▶ On December 12, 1890, orders were sent out for the arrest of Sitting Bull.

EXCEPTIONS: Commas are not needed if the date is inverted or if only the month and year are given: *The deadline is 15 April 2004. May 2003 was a surprisingly cold month.*

Addresses. The elements of an address or place name are followed by commas. A zip code, however, is not preceded by a comma.

- ▶ Greg lived at 708 Spring Street, Washington, Illinois 61571.

Titles. If a title follows a name, separate it from the rest of the sentence with a pair of commas.

- ▶ Sandra Barnes, M.D., performed the surgery.

17j Misuses of the comma

Do not use commas unless you have a good reason for using them. In particular, avoid using the comma in the following situations.

BETWEEN COMPOUND ELEMENTS THAT ARE NOT INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

- ▶ Marie Curie discovered radium, and later applied her work on radioactivity to medicine.

TO SEPARATE A VERB FROM ITS SUBJECT

- ▶ Zoos large enough to give the animals freedom to roam, are becoming more popular.

BETWEEN CUMULATIVE ADJECTIVES (See p. 66.)

- ▶ Joyce was wearing a slinky, red silk gown.

TO SET OFF RESTRICTIVE ELEMENTS (See pp. 66–68.)

- ▶ Drivers, who think they own the road, make cycling a dangerous sport.
- ▶ Margaret Mead's book, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, caused controversy when it was published.

AFTER A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION

- ▶ Occasionally soap operas are live, but, more often they are taped.

AFTER *SUCH AS* OR *LIKE*

- ▶ Plants such as, begonias and impatiens add color to a shady garden.

BEFORE *THAN*

- ▶ Touring Crete was more thrilling for us, than visiting the Greek islands frequented by the jet set.

BEFORE A PARENTHESIS

- ▶ At MCI Sylvia began at the bottom (with only a cubicle and a swivel chair), but within five years she had been promoted to supervisor.

TO SET OFF AN INDIRECT (REPORTED) QUOTATION

- ▶ Samuel Goldwyn once said that a verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.

WITH A QUESTION MARK OR AN EXCLAMATION POINT

- ▶ "Why don't you try it?" she coaxed.

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18

The semicolon and the colon

18a The semicolon

The semicolon is used between independent clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction. It can also be used between items in a series containing internal punctuation.

The semicolon is never used between elements of unequal grammatical rank.

Between independent clauses. When related independent clauses appear in one sentence, they are ordinarily connected with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*). The coordinating conjunction expresses the relation between the clauses. If the relation is clear without a conjunction, a writer may choose to connect the clauses with a semicolon instead.

Injustice is relatively easy to bear; what stings is justice. —H. L. Mencken

A writer may also choose to connect the clauses with a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb such as *however* or *therefore* or a transitional phrase such as *for example* or *in fact*.

He swallowed a lot of wisdom; however, it seemed as if all of it had gone down the wrong way. —G. C. Lichtenberg

CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS	accordingly, also, anyway, besides, certainly, consequently, conversely, finally, furthermore, hence, however, incidentally, indeed, instead, likewise, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, next, nonetheless, otherwise, similarly, specifically, still, subsequently, then, therefore, thus
TRANSITIONAL PHRASES	after all, as a matter of fact, as a result, at any rate, at the same time, even so, for example, for instance, in addition, in conclusion, in fact, in other words, in the first place, on the contrary, on the other hand

CAUTION: A semicolon must be used whenever a coordinating conjunction has been omitted between independent clauses. To use merely a comma—or to use a comma and a conjunctive adverb or transitional expression—creates an error known as a comma splice. (See p. 51.)

- ▶ In 1800, a traveler needed six weeks to get from New York City to Chicago; in 1860, the trip by railroad took only two days.
- ▶ Many corals grow very gradually; in fact, the creation of a coral reef can take centuries.

Between items in a series containing internal punctuation. Ordinarily, items in a series are separated by commas. If one or more of the items contain internal punctuation, however, a writer may use semicolons instead.

Classic science fiction sagas are *Star Trek*, with Mr. Spock and his large pointed ears; *Battlestar Galactica*, with its Cylon raiders; and *Star Wars*, with Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, and Darth Vader.

Misuses of the semicolon. Do not use a semicolon in the following situations.

BETWEEN AN INDEPENDENT AND A SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

- ▶ The media like to portray my generation as lazy~~;~~[^] although polls show that we work as hard as the twentysomethings before us.

BETWEEN AN APPOSITIVE AND THE WORD IT REFERS TO

- ▶ We were fascinated by the species *Argyroneta aquatica*~~;~~[^] a spider that lives underwater.

TO INTRODUCE A LIST

- ▶ Some of my favorite film stars have home pages on the Web~~;~~[^] John Travolta, Susan Sarandon, Brad Pitt, and Emma Thompson.

BETWEEN INDEPENDENT CLAUSES JOINED BY *AND*, *BUT*, *OR*, *NOR*, *FOR*, *SO*, OR *YET*

- ▶ Five of the applicants had worked with spreadsheets~~;~~[^] but only one was familiar with database management.

18b The colon

The colon is used after an independent clause to call attention to the words that follow it. The colon also has certain conventional uses.

Main uses of the colon. After an independent clause, a writer may use a colon to direct the reader's attention to a list, an appositive, or a quotation.

A LIST

The routine includes the following: twenty knee bends, fifty leg lifts, and five minutes of running in place.

AN APPOSITIVE

My roommate is guilty of two of the seven deadly sins: gluttony and sloth.

A QUOTATION

Consider the words of John F. Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

For other ways of introducing quotations, see pages 81–82.

A colon may also be used between independent clauses if the second summarizes or explains the first.

Faith is like love: It cannot be forced.

The second clause may begin with a capital or a lowercase letter.

Minds are like parachutes: They [*or they*] function only when open.

Other uses. Use a colon after the salutation in a formal letter, to indicate hours and minutes, to show proportions, between a title and subtitle, and to separate city and publisher in bibliographic entries.

Dear Sir or Madam:

5:30 P.M. (or p.m.)

The ratio of women to men was 2:1.

Alvin Ailey: A Life in Dance

Boston: Bedford, 2004

NOTE: In biblical references, a colon is ordinarily used between chapter and verse (Luke 2:14). The Modern Language Association recommends a period (Luke 2.14).

Misuses of the colon. A colon must be preceded by an independent clause. Therefore, avoid using it in the following situations.

BETWEEN A VERB AND ITS OBJECT OR COMPLEMENT

- ▶ Some important vitamins found in vegetables are; vitamin A, thiamine, niacin, and vitamin C.

BETWEEN A PREPOSITION AND ITS OBJECT

- ▶ The heart's two pumps each consist of; an upper chamber, or atrium, and a lower chamber, or ventricle.

AFTER SUCH AS, INCLUDING, OR FOR EXAMPLE

- ▶ The trees on campus include fine Japanese specimens such as; black pines, ginkgos, and cutleaf maples.

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19 The apostrophe

The apostrophe is used to indicate possession and to mark contractions. In addition, it has a few conventional uses.

19a To indicate possession

The apostrophe is used to indicate that a noun is possessive. Possessive nouns usually indicate ownership, as in *Tim's hat* or *the editor's desk*. Frequently, however,

ownership is only loosely implied: *the tree's roots, a day's work*. If you are not sure whether a noun is possessive, try turning it into an *of* phrase: *the roots of the tree, the work of a day*.

When to add -'s. Add -'s if the noun does not end in -s or if the noun is singular and ends in -s.

Luck often propels a rock musician's career.

Thank you for refunding the children's money.

Lois's sister spent last year in India.

EXCEPTION: If pronunciation would be awkward with the added -'s, some writers use only the apostrophe: *Sophocles' plays are among my favorites*. Either use is acceptable.

When to add only an apostrophe. If the noun is plural and ends in -s, add only an apostrophe.

Both diplomats' briefcases were stolen.

Joint possession. To show joint possession, use -'s (or -s') with the last noun only; to show individual possession, make all nouns possessive.

Have you seen Joyce and Greg's new camper?

Hernando's and Maria's expectations were quite different.

Compound nouns. If a noun is compound, use -'s (or -s') with the last element.

Her father-in-law's sculpture won first place.

Indefinite pronouns such as someone. Use -'s to indicate that an indefinite pronoun is possessive. Indefinite pronouns refer to no specific person or thing: *everyone, someone, no one*, and so on.

This diet will improve almost anyone's health.

19b To mark contractions

In a contraction, an apostrophe takes the place of missing letters.

It's a shame that Frank can't go on the tour.

It's stands for *it is*, *can't* for *cannot*.

The apostrophe is also used to mark the omission of the first two digits of a year (*the class of '99*) or years (*the '60s generation*).

19c Conventional uses

Traditionally, an apostrophe has been used to pluralize numbers, letters, abbreviations, and words mentioned as words. The trend, however, is toward omitting the apostrophe. Either use is correct, but be consistent.

Plural numbers and abbreviations. To pluralize a number or an abbreviation, you may add *-s* or *'s*.

Peggy skated nearly perfect figure 8s (*or 8's*).

We collected only four IOUs (*or IOU's*) out of forty.

NOTE: To pluralize decades, most current writers omit the apostrophe: 1920s (*not 1920's*)

Plural letters. Italicize the letter and use roman type for the *-s* ending. Use of an apostrophe is usually optional; the Modern Language Association continues to recommend the apostrophe.

Two large *J*s (*or J's*) were painted on the door.

Plurals of words mentioned as words. Italicize the word and use roman type for the *-s* ending. Use of an apostrophe is optional.

We've heard enough *maybes* (*or maybe's*).

Words mentioned as words may also appear in quotation marks. When you choose this option, use the apostrophe: We've heard enough "maybe's."

19d Misuses of the apostrophe

Do not use an apostrophe in the following situations.

WITH NOUNS THAT ARE NOT POSSESSIVE

outpatients

- ▶ Some ~~outpatient's~~ are given special parking permits.
^

IN THE POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS *ITS*, *WHOSE*, *HIS*, *HERS*, *OURS*, *YOURS*, AND *THEIRS**its*

- ▶ Each area has ~~it's~~ own conference room.
^

It's means *it is*. The possessive pronoun *its* contains no apostrophe despite the fact that it is possessive.

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20 Quotation marks

Quotation marks are used to enclose direct quotations. They are also used around some titles and to set off words used as words.

20a To enclose direct quotations

Direct quotations of a person's words, whether spoken or written, must be in quotation marks.

“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson.

EXCEPTION: When a long quotation has been set off from the text by indenting, quotation marks are not needed. (See pp. 122, 163, and 191.)

Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

According to Paul Elliott, Eskimo hunters “chant an ancient magic song to the seal they are after: ‘Beast of the sea! Come and place yourself before me in the early morning!’”

20b Around titles of short works

Use quotation marks around titles of newspaper and magazine articles, poems, short stories, songs, episodes of television and radio programs, and chapters or subdivisions of books.

The poem “Mother to Son” is by Langston Hughes.

NOTE: Titles of books, plays, and films and names of magazines and newspapers are put in italics or underlined. (See pp. 93–94.)

20c To set off words used as words

Although words used as words are ordinarily underlined or italicized (see pp. 94–95), quotation marks are also acceptable.

The words “affect” and “effect” are frequently confused.

20d Other punctuation with quotation marks

This section describes the conventions to observe in placing various marks of punctuation inside or outside quotation marks. It also explains how to punctuate when introducing quoted material.

Periods and commas. Place periods and commas inside quotation marks.

“This is a stick-up,” said the well-dressed young couple. “We want all your money.”

This rule applies to single and double quotation marks, and it applies to all uses of quotation marks.

NOTE: MLA and APA parenthetical citations are an exception to this rule. Put the parenthetical citation after the quotation mark and before the period. MLA: *According to Cole, “The instruments of science have vastly extended our senses” (53).* APA: *According to Cole (1999), “The instruments of science have vastly extended our senses” (p. 53).*

Colons and semicolons. Put colons and semicolons outside quotation marks.

Harold wrote, “I regret that I cannot attend the AIDS fundraiser”; his letter, however, contained a contribution.

Question marks and exclamation points. Put question marks and exclamation points inside quotation marks unless they apply to the sentence as a whole.

Contrary to tradition, bedtime at my house is marked by “Mommy, can I tell you a story now?”

Have you heard the old proverb “Do not climb the hill until you reach it”?

In the first sentence, the question mark applies only to the quoted question. In the second sentence, the question mark applies to the whole sentence.

Introducing quoted material. After a word group introducing a quotation, use a colon, a comma, or no punctuation at all, whichever is appropriate in context.

If a quotation has been formally introduced, a colon is appropriate. A formal introduction is a full independent clause, not just an expression such as *he said* or *she writes*.

Morrow views personal ads as an art form: “The personal ad is like a haiku of self-celebration, a brief solo played on one’s own horn.”

If a quotation is introduced or followed by an expression such as *he said* or *she writes*, use a comma.

Stephen Leacock once said, “I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.”

“You can be a little ungrammatical if you come from the right part of the country,” writes Robert Frost.

When you blend a quotation into your own sentence, use either a comma or no punctuation, depending on the way in which the quotation fits into the sentence structure.

The champion could, as he put it, “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.”

Hudson notes that the prisoners escaped “by squeezing through a tiny window eighteen feet above the floor of their cell.”

If a quotation appears at the beginning of a sentence, set it off with a comma unless the quotation ends with a question mark or an exclamation point.

“We shot them like dogs,” boasted Davy Crockett, who was among Jackson’s troops.

“What is it?” I asked, bracing myself.

If a quoted sentence is interrupted by explanatory words, use commas to set off the explanatory words.

“A great many people think they are thinking,” observed William James, “when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.”

If two successive quoted sentences from the same source are interrupted by explanatory words, use a comma before the explanatory words and a period after them.

“I was a flop as a daily reporter,” admitted E. B. White. “Every piece had to be a masterpiece—and before you knew it, Tuesday was Wednesday.”

20e Misuses of quotation marks

Do not use quotation marks to draw attention to familiar slang, to disown trite expressions, or to justify an attempt at humor.

- ▶ Between Thanksgiving and Super Bowl Sunday, many American wives become *f*football widows.*!*

Do not use quotation marks around indirect quotations. Indirect quotations report a person’s words instead of quoting them directly.

- ▶ After leaving the scene of the domestic quarrel, the officer said that *f*he was due for a coffee break.*!*

Do not use quotation marks around the title of your own essay.

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21 Other marks

21a The period

Use a period to end all sentences except direct questions or genuine exclamations. Use a period, not a question mark, for an indirect question—that is, a reported question.

Celia asked whether the picnic would be canceled.

A period is conventionally used with personal titles, Latin abbreviations, academic degrees, systems of chronology, and designations of time.

Mr.	i.e.	Ph.D.	B.C.	A.M. (or a.m.)
Ms.	e.g.	R.N.	B.C.E.	P.M. (or p.m.)
Dr.	etc.	B.A.	A.D.	
		LL.D.		

A period is not used with postal service abbreviations for states, organization names, and most capitalized abbreviations.

CA	TX	NATO	IRS
NY	USA	AFL-CIO	FCC

Usage varies, however. When in doubt, consult a dictionary, a style manual, or a publication by the agency in question. Even the yellow pages can help.

NOTE: If a sentence ends with a period marking an abbreviation, do not add a second period.

21b The question mark

Use a question mark after a direct question.

What is the horsepower of a 747 engine?

If a polite request is written in the form of a question, you may use a question mark, though usage varies.

Would you please send me your catalog of lilies?

CAUTION: Use a period, not a question mark, after an indirect question, one that is reported rather than asked directly.

He asked me who was teaching the mythology course.

21c The exclamation point

Use an exclamation point after a sentence that expresses exceptional feeling or deserves special emphasis.

We yelled to the police officer, “He’s not drunk!
He’s in diabetic shock!”

CAUTION: Do not overuse the exclamation point.

- ▶ In the fisherman’s memory the fish lives on,
increasing in length and weight with each passing
year, until at last it is big enough to shade a
fishing boat!.

This sentence doesn’t need to be pumped up with an exclamation point. It is emphatic enough without it.

21d The dash

The dash may be used to set off material that deserves special emphasis. When typing, use two hyphens to form a dash (- -), with no spaces before or after them. (If your word processing program has what is known as an “em-dash,” you may use it instead, with no space before or after it.)

Use a dash to introduce a list, a restatement, an amplification, or a dramatic shift in tone or thought.

Along the wall are the bulk liquids—sesame seed oil, honey, safflower oil, and half-liquid peanut butter.

Consider the amount of sugar in the average person’s diet—104 pounds per year.

Kiere took a few steps back, came running full speed, kicked a mighty kick—and missed the ball.

In the first two examples, the writer could also use a colon. (See 18b.) The colon is more formal than the dash and not quite as dramatic.

Use a pair of dashes to set off parenthetical material that deserves special emphasis or to set off an appositive that contains commas.

Everything that went wrong—from the peeping Tom at her window to my head-on collision—was blamed on our move.

In my hometown the basic needs of people—food, clothing, and shelter—are less costly than in Denver.

CAUTION: Unless you have a specific reason for using the dash, avoid it. Unnecessary dashes create a choppy effect.

21e Parentheses

Use parentheses to enclose supplemental material, minor digressions, and afterthoughts.

After taking her temperature, pulse, and blood pressure (routine vital signs), the nurse made Becky comfortable.

Use parentheses to enclose letters or numbers labeling items in a series.

There are three points of etiquette in poker:
 (1) always allow someone to cut the cards,
 (2) don't forget to ante up, and (3) never stack your chips.

CAUTION: Do not overuse parentheses. Often a sentence reads more gracefully without them.

- from ten to fifty million*
- Researchers have said that ~~ten million (estimates run as high as fifty million)~~ Americans have hypoglycemia.

21f Brackets

Use brackets to enclose any words or phrases inserted into an otherwise word-for-word quotation.

Audubon reports that “if there are not enough young to balance deaths, the end of the species [California condor] is inevitable.”

The *Audubon* article did not contain the words *California condor* in the sentence quoted.

The Latin word “sic” in brackets indicates that an error in a quoted sentence appears in the original source.

According to the review, k.d. lang’s performance was brilliant, “exceeding [sic] the expectations of even her most loyal fans.”

21g The ellipsis mark

Use an ellipsis mark, three spaced periods, to indicate that you have deleted material from an otherwise word-for-word quotation.

Reuben reports that “when the amount of cholesterol circulating in the blood rises over . . . 300 milligrams per 100, the chances of a heart attack increase dramatically.”

If you delete a full sentence or more in the middle of a quoted passage, use a period before the three ellipsis dots.

CAUTION: Do not use the ellipsis mark at the beginning of a quotation; do not use it at the end of a quotation unless you have cut some words from the end of the final sentence quoted.

21h The slash

Use the slash to separate two or three lines of poetry that have been run in with your text. Add a space both before and after the slash.

In the opening lines of “Jordan,” George Herbert pokes fun at popular poems of his time: “Who says that fictions only and false hair / Become a verse? Is there in truth no beauty?”

Use the slash sparingly, if at all, to separate options: *pass/fail*, *producer/director*. Put no space around the slash. Avoid using a slash for *he/she*, *and/or*, and *his/her*.

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