Punctuation Rules Reference List

Punctuation is the method of dividing text into sentences and parts of sentences by means of points and marks: comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), period (.), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), dash (-), parentheses ( ), brackets [] or {} and of late smiley faces :-), winking faces ;-) and not so happy faces, :-/

Marks of Punctuation:

Comma - A comma is the mark of punctuation (,) that denotes the smallest degree of separation between parts of a sentence and frequently indicates that a list or a parenthend follows. Three or more nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, or adverbs should be separated by commas. The members of a compound sentence, when long and connected by conjunctions, should be separated by commas. A direct quotation should be set off with a comma. When reading, leave a short breath's space at a comma to aid diction and reading comprehension.

Semicolon - A semicolon is the mark of punctuation (;) that denotes the next degree of separation between parts of a sentence before introducing an example, between clauses of compound sentences joined by conjunctions, between the clauses of compound sentences when there is no conjunction or if the clauses are long. When reading, leave a more full breath's space at a semicolon to aid diction and reading comprehension.

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Colon - A colon is the mark of punctuation (:) that denotes a longer degree of separation, equal to that of a period, between parts of a sentence before an example, a list, a lengthy quotation, or after the introduction to a speech. The colon is also used between numerical combinations as with Bible chapter and verse; Gen. 3:15 or volume and page number; The Tribune 23:12. When reading, leave two breath's space to aid diction and reading comprehension.

Dash - A dash is a straight, horizontal line placed where a sentence breaks off suddenly, where there is a change in meaning or construction, or where marks of parenthesis would be.

Parentheses - The marks of parenthesis are the marks of punctuation ( ) that set off unrelated words, phrases, or clauses that do not change the meaning of the sentence when omitted. Use marks of parenthesis in pairs.

Brackets - Brackets are marks of punctuation, either [ ] or { }, that include words, phrases, or clauses that describe what precedes them or corrects an error.

Period - The period is the mark of punctuation (.) that denotes the end of a declarative or imperative sentence and has the longest degree of separation. A period is used after every abbreviated word. When reading, leave two breath's space at the end of a sentence to aid diction and reading comprehension.

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Question Mark - The question mark is the mark of punctuation (?) that denotes the end of an interrogative sentence, which denotes that a question has been asked, and has the same degree of separation as a period. When reading, leave two breath's space at the end of a sentence to aid diction and reading comprehension.

Exclamation Mark - The exclamation mark (exclamation point) is the mark of punctuation (!) that denotes the end of an exclamatory sentence, which shows emotion, and has the same degree of separation as a period. A period is used after every abbreviated word. When reading, leave two breath's space at the end of a sentence to aid diction and reading comprehension.

Quotation Marks - The quotation mark is the mark of punctuation used in pairs " " that show a verbatim passage from another speaker.
Contractions – A contraction shows that one or more letters are missing from one or more words by using an apostrophe in their place.

Abbreviations - An abbreviation is a shortened word or title where an apostrophe shows missing letters.

Apostrophe – An apostrophe is a comma suspended near the top of letters that is used show that one or more letters are missing in an abbreviation or to show possession.

Hyphen – A hyphen is a short dash used to join compound words, to divide syllables as in music or the end of a line when the rest of the word is carried to the next line.

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