

The 15 Punctuation Marks.

In order of how much they do
(and how hard they should be to learn)

Period

Ends a sentence flatly

Question Mark

Ends a sentence with curiosity

Exclamation Mark

Ends a sentence with gusto

Asterisk

Suggests a further comment, clarification or qualifier

En Dash

Replaces the word "through" or "to" when suggesting a duration of time

Semicolon

Joins two related complete sentences

Separates list items when commas are in the list items

Brackets

Indicate editorial comments by someone other than the author

Indicate asides or other parenthetical information already in parentheses

Parentheses

Suggest related but unnecessary information

Clarify a writer's frame of mind

Indicate citations or page references

Ellipsis

Indicates an omission of words in a quote

Indicates hesitating speech in dialogue

Suggests that something is being left out

Em Dash

Expands with emphasis a main clause

Separates and draws special attention to ideas

Suggests an interruption in thought or change in direction

Quotation Mark

Indicates a direct quotation

Indicates a dictionary definition

Indicates the words on a sign

Suggests sarcasm or snarkiness

Highlights a word in a sentence

Indicates short media pieces, like poems, songs, articles, and chapter titles

Colon

Expands or clarifies a main clause

Introduces lists

Comes after salutations

Separates hours from minutes

Separates titles from subtitles

Indicates dialogue in plays

Suggests ratios

Hyphen

Creates compound adjectives

Combines two-digit numbers

Clarifies verbs with common prefixes

Joins prefixes to capitalized words

Joins a letter or a number to a word

Joins a prefix to a date

Separates words with same three letters in a row

Apostrophe

As single quotation mark, indicates quote within a quote

Omits letters and numbers

Creates a plural for a single letter

Makes a noun possessive

Pluralizes a singular noun that ends in 's'

Makes abbreviations possessive

Creates plural possessions

Creates compound possessions

In headlines, used as a double quotation mark

Comma

Separates items in a list

Separates coordinate adjectives

Separates coordinating conjunctions

Separates dependent clauses

Separates conditional clauses

Separates appositives

Comes after introductory phrases

Comes after interjections

Comes after direct address

Comes after a title

Separates the day of the month from the year

Separates numbers larger than 999

Separates cities from states

Comes after abbreviations i.e. and e.g.

Comes before quotations

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