

# Punctuation

TEAS 7 English Review

Smart Edition

Nursing

# Why is punctuation important?

Because it's the difference between:

“Let’s cook, Aunt Kathy!”

and

“Let’s cook Aunt Kathy!” (*Uh-oh...*)

Without correct punctuation, the meaning of a sentence won't be clear– and it might even lead to a dangerous misunderstanding!

1. Terminal vs. Internal Punctuation
2. Periods, Question Marks, and Exclamation Points
3. Commas
4. Semicolons and Colons
5. Apostrophes
6. Hyphens
7. Quotation Marks

## Terminal Punctuation

Terminal punctuation is used at the end of a sentence. Every complete sentence needs to end with punctuation.

- Periods
- Question Marks
- Exclamation Points

## Internal Punctuation

Internal punctuation is used within a sentence to help keep words, phrases, and clauses in order. These punctuation marks can be used to indicate elements such as direct quotations and definitions in a sentence.

- Commas
- Semicolons
- Colons
- Apostrophes
- Hyphens
- Quotation Marks

Periods (.) mark the end of a declarative sentence (one that states a fact) or an imperative sentence (one that states a command or request).

- Doctors save lives.
- Please hand me that pencil.

Periods can also be used in abbreviations.

- She has a B.A. in Psychology.

**Question Marks (?)** signify the end of a sentence that is a question. Where, when, who, whom, what, why, and how are common words that begin question sentences.

- Who is he?
- Where is the restaurant?

**Exclamation Points (!)** indicate strong feelings or shouting, or emphasize a feeling.

- Watch out!
- That is incredible!
- I hate you!

A **comma (,)** signifies a small break within a sentence and separates words, clauses, or ideas.

**Commas** are used before conjunctions that connect two independent clauses.

- I ate some cookies, so I am not hungry.

**Commas** are also used to set off an introductory phrase.

- After the test, she grabbed dinner with a friend.
- Yesterday, I worked out.

Short phrases that emphasize thoughts or emotions are enclosed by **commas**.

- The school year, thankfully, ends in a week.

Additional information that could be removed without affecting the grammatical structure of the sentence is also enclosed by **commas**.

- His sister, who is blonde, is in medical school.



**Commas** also set off the words yes and no.

- Yes, I am available this weekend.
- No, she has not finished her homework.

**Commas** set off a question tag.

- It is beautiful outside, isn't it?

**Commas** are used to indicate direct address.

- Are you ready, Jack?
- Mom, what is for dinner?

**Commas** separate items in a series. When you have three or more items in a series, you need at least one comma.\*

- We ate eggs, potatoes,\* and toast for breakfast.
- I need to grab coffee, go to the store,\* and put gas in my car.

\*The comma between the second-to-last item and the word “and” is called an **Oxford comma**. Grammarians debate if it is necessary.

# Semicolons and Colons

**Semicolons (;)** are used to connect two independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction like *and* or *but*. A **semicolon** creates a bond between two sentences that are related. Do not capitalize the first word after the **semicolon** unless it is a word that is normally capitalized.

- The ice cream man drove down my street; I bought a popsicle.
- My mom cooked dinner; the chicken was delicious.
- It is cloudy today; it will probably rain.

**Colons (:)** introduce a list.

- She teaches three subjects: English, history, and geography.  
At the end of a sentence, **colons** can serve to emphasize a word or phrase.
- She had one goal: pay the bills.

# Apostrophes

**Apostrophes (’)** can be used to indicate possession.

- Bob has a car – Bob’s car is blue.
- Steve’s cat is beautiful.

For plurals that are also possessive, put the apostrophe after the s.

- Soldiers’ uniforms are impressive.

**Apostrophes** are also used in contractions, when two words are combined.

- I do not have a dog – I don’t have a dog
- I cannot swim – I can’t swim.
- It is raining – It’s raining.

**CAREFUL!** ‘Its’ and ‘it’s’ do not follow the normal possessive rules. ‘Its’ is possessive, while ‘it’s’ is the contraction of ‘it is.’

- It’s (*it is*) a beautiful day to be at the park.
- The dog has many toys, but its favorite (*the favorite of the dog*) is the rope.

# Hyphens

**Hyphens (-)** are mainly used to create compound words.

- The documentary was a real eye-opener for me.
- My sister-in-law is very friendly.
- Vacation is important for the well-being of our employees.

Multi-word descriptors before nouns need hyphens between all words:

- The three-day weekend was fantastic.
- The graduate is a twenty-two-year-old woman.
- A state-of-the-art smartwatch is expensive.

# Quotation Marks

**Quotation Marks (“**) are used when directly using another person’s words in your own writing. Commas and periods, sometimes **question marks** and exclamation points, are placed within quotation marks. Colons and semicolons are placed outside of the **quotation marks**, unless they are part of the quoted material. If quoting an entire sentence, capitalize the first word. If it is a fragment, do not capitalize the first word.

- Ernest Hemingway once claimed, “There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self.”
- Steve said, “I will be there at noon.”

An indirect quote which paraphrases what someone else said does not need **quotation marks**.

- Steve said he would be there at noon.

**Quotation marks** are also used for the titles of short works such as poems, articles, and chapters. They are not italicized.

- Robert Frost wrote “The Road Not Taken.”

- **Periods (.)** signify the end of a sentence or are used in abbreviations.
- **Question Marks (?)** are also used at the end of a sentence and distinguish the sentence as a question.
- **Exclamation Points (!)** indicate strong feelings, shouting, or emphasis and are usually at the end of the sentence.
- **Commas (,)** are small breaks within a sentence that separate clauses, ideas, or words. They are used to set off introductory phrases, the words yes and no, question tags, indicate direct address, and separate items in a series.

- **Semicolons (;)** connect two similar sentences without coordinating conjunctions such as 'and' or 'but.'
- **Colons (:)** are used to introduce a list or emphasize a word or phrase.
- **Apostrophes (')** indicate possession or a contraction of two words.
- **Hyphens (-)** are used to create compound words.
- **Quotation Marks (“”)** are used when directly quoting someone else's words and to indicate the title of poems, chapters, and articles.