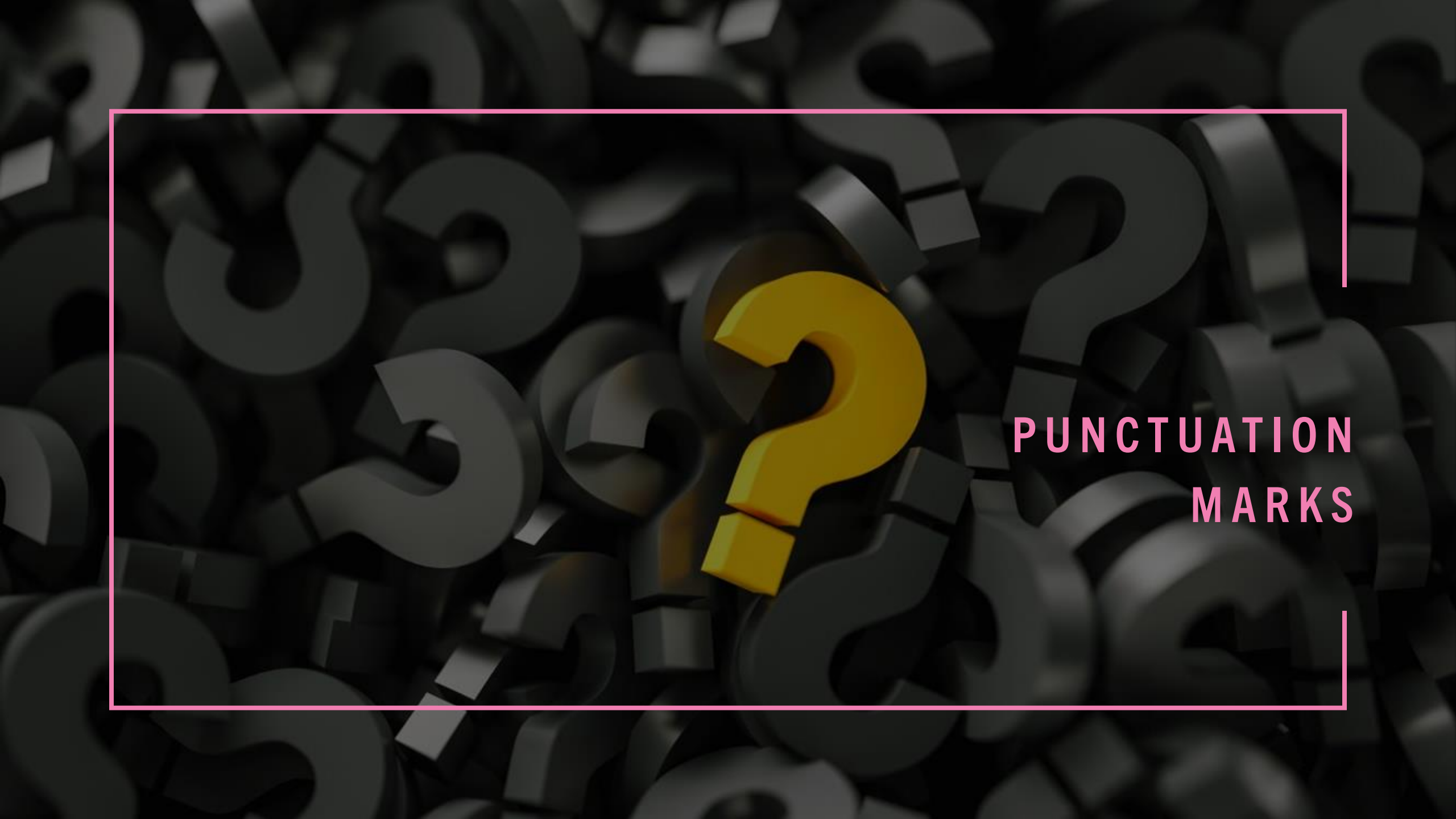


PUNCTUATION MARKS

Punctuation in English is like the little marks, such as dots (periods), lines (commas), and special signs (exclamation marks and question marks), that you see in sentences. Just as traffic signs help cars on the road, punctuation allows sentences to be clear and make sense. We use these marks to know where sentences begin and end (periods), when to pause (commas), and how to show strong feelings (exclamation marks) or ask questions (question marks). Learning about these marks is like learning to read the road signs.

- Punctuation marks are like helpers in writing. They do three important jobs:

1. **Show Where to Stop:** Punctuation marks, like periods, tell us where a sentence ends. It's like a red light for sentences. They help us understand when one idea is finished and a new one begins.
2. **Make Sentences Clear:** Commas, among other marks, create pauses in sentences. This pause can help us know when to take a breath while reading, making the words easier to understand.
3. **Show Emotions and Questions:** Exclamation marks show excitement or strong feelings, like when you're really happy or surprised. Question marks help us know when a sentence is a question, like when we're asking something.

- So, punctuation marks are like signposts in writing. They guide us and make our writing clear and interesting.
- Today, we will learn about these important punctuation marks and others that are important for you to know.

USING PERIODS .

Periods end declarative sentences and requests or mild commands.

- **Declarative**: His name is Joshua.
- **Request or Mild Command**: Please be sure to tell her I am coming.

Periods are used to end most **abbreviations** except for acronyms and abbreviations which are pronounced. information.

If a sentence **ends** with an **abbreviation**, no additional period is needed. If the sentence requires a question mark or exclamation point, one may be added after the period.

- Incorrect: Please make the check out to Roland N. Payne, D.D.S. (Second period at end not needed)
- Correct: Please make the check out to Roland N. Payne, D.D.S.
- Correct: Do I make the check out to Roland N. Payne, D.D.S.?

A period is used after numbers and letters in outlines.

- **Outline:**

  I. Punctuation

  A. Periods

  1. End sentences

  2. Abbreviations

  3. Outlines

A period always **comes before a closing quotation mark.**

- Incorrect: George said, "I don't get it".
- Correct: George said, "I don't get it."

QUESTION MARKS

Question marks end all **direct questions**. This includes incomplete questions and statements intended as questions.

- Direct Question: What is your name?
- Incomplete Question: Really? When? No kidding?
- Statement Intended as Question: Your name is Fred?

Sentences which **describe** a question but do not **directly** ask a question are called **indirect questions.** They do not take a question mark.

- Incorrect: He asked if he could leave early?
  (Describes but does not ask a question)
- Correct: He asked if he could leave early.
- Correct: He asked, "May I leave early?"
  (In the last one, the question is directly quoted.)

Use **a question mark in parentheses** after a point of fact to show uncertainty about it. Use sparingly and only for items impossible to verify.

- **Example:** His great-great-grandfather (Nelson Bridger?) supposedly fought in the Black Hawk War.
- **Example:** Chaucer was born in 1343 (?).
  (Note that a question mark used this way in not an end mark. A period is still needed.)

EXCLAMATION POINT

Sometimes called the exclamation mark, the **exclamation point** is used at the end of a sentence or after an interjection to show strong emotion or emphasis.

Exclamatory sentence: The rain did not stop for four days!

Strong command: Be back at ten o'clock or else!

Interjection: Wow!

When an emphatic interjection or direct address begins a sentence, you may use an exclamation point or a comma, depending on how much you want to show the strong emotion.

Correct: No, I don't want to go there.

Correct, more emotion: No, I don't want to go there!

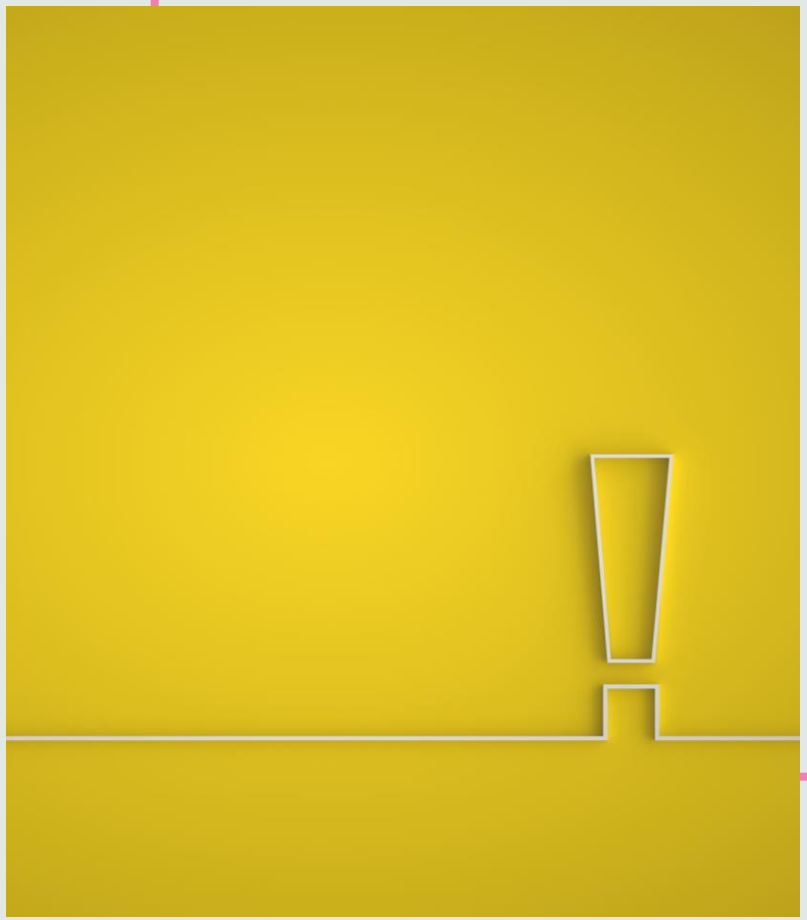
Correct, even more emphasis: No! I don't want to go there!

Beware of overusing exclamation points. Using them too frequently makes them less meaningful.

Use of an **exclamation point inside parentheses** is used by some to show **irony**.

Usually, the ironic tone should be clear from the words, but sometimes this special punctuation is added for emphasis. Some authorities do not consider this construction necessary, and it is of very limited use in most standard English writing.

OK, informal: That butcher (!) is a vegetarian.
(The punctuation is probably unnecessary, but it was placed there to emphasize the irony.)



COMMAS ,

Commas are the most frequently used punctuation mark in English. Originally used to show a pause, they are used nowadays in a variety of situations to make writing clearer.

The Three Most Common Comma Rules

While there are **many** specific uses for commas, nearly **eighty-five percent** of the commas used in written English are used in a mere **three** situations.
If you know the basic rule for these three cases, you can use commas in over four-fifths of the times you need to use commas.

1. Put a comma before a coordinating conjunction that separates two independent clauses.
2. Put a comma after introductory words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence.
3. Use commas to set off elements that interrupt or add information in a sentence.

Commas in Compound Sentences

Use a **comma** to separate independent clauses in a compound sentence when they are separated by a conjunction.The comma goes after the first clause and before the coordinating conjunction that separates the clauses.Make sure they are independent clauses and not some other construction where commas are not required.

Correct: We washed the dog, and then we cleaned up the mess that he made.
(This contains two independent clauses with their own subject and verb: We washed and we cleaned. The third clause, that he made, is a subordinate clause, so the rule does not apply.
Incorrect: We washed the dog, and then cleaned up his mess.

Commas in a Series

Use commas to separate **three or more** words, phrases, or clauses in a series.
A **conjunction** goes between the last two items of the series.While some authorities say that the comma before the conjunction is optional, leaving it out may cause confusion, so it is better to include it.
Words: Use commas to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses.

Phrases: This morning I woke up, got dressed, brushed my teeth, and ate breakfast.
Clauses: In fact, the bus was full of people who got dressed, who brushed their teeth, and who ate breakfast that morning.
Incorrect: The street was filled with angry protesters, shouting spectators and police.
(Leaving out the last comma makes it look like the police were shouting, too.)

Correct: The street was filled with angry protesters, shouting spectators, and police.
(Makes it clearer.)

Semicolons and colons were originally used to designate pauses shorter than a period and longer than a comma. Now they are used to show certain grammatical relationships with the colon the more emphatic of the two.

Semicolons with Clauses

Semicolons are used to **separate** independent clauses in three different cases.

1. When there are **no conjunctions** separating the clauses.

Incorrect: I like you, John likes you, too.
(Semicolon needed)

Correct: I like you; John likes you, too.

2. When the clauses are separated by a conjunctive adverb or other parenthetical expression set off by commas.

Correct: I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live.--Galatians 2:20.
(Nevertheless is a conjunctive adverb.)

Correct: Hector was a Trojan; Achilles, on the other hand, was an Achaean.

3. When the clauses themselves contain commas.

Incorrect: He wears shoes with kilties, a leather fringe, but I prefer penny loafers myself.
(Since the clause already has a comma, a semicolon separating the clauses is needed to make sentence clear.)

Correct: He wears shoes with kilties, a leather fringe; but I prefer penny loafers myself.

Semicolons in a Series

When the items in a **series** themselves contain commas, separate the items with semicolons.

Incorrect: We visited Erie, Pennsylvania, Buffalo, New York, and Toronto, Ontario.
(Confusing. Semicolons needed to make clear distinctions.)

Correct: We visited Erie, Pennsylvania; Buffalo, New York; and Toronto, Ontario.

SEMICOLONS ;

COLONS :

Semicolons and colons were originally used to designate pauses shorter than a period and longer than a comma. Now they are used to show certain grammatical relationships with the colon the more emphatic of the two.

Colons with Lists

Use a colon **before a list** when the list is preceded by a complete independent clause.

Never use a colon to separate a preposition from its objects or a verb from its complements.

Some form of the word follow usually indicates a colon before the list.

Correct: John has all the ingredients: minced clams, milk, potatoes, and onions.
(The list is preceded by a complete independent clause.)

Incorrect: For their anniversary they went to: Aruba St. Martin, Jamaica, and the Bahamas.
(The colon separates the preposition to from its objects.)

Correct: For their anniversary they went to Aruba St. Martin, Jamaica, and the Bahamas.
(No colon needed)

Incorrect: To make clam chowder you need: minced clams, milk, potatoes, and onions.
(The colon separates the verb need from its complements.)

Correct: To make clam chowder you need minced clams milk, potatoes, and onions.
(No colon needed)

Either incorrect sentence above could also be corrected by adding a form of the verb **follow**

Correct: For their anniversary they went to the following places: Aruba, St. Martin, Jamaica, and the Bahamas.
(Now the word places is the object of the preposition to, and the colon follows a complete independent clause.)

Correct: To make clam chowder you need the following: minced clams, milk, potatoes, and onions.
(Now the following is the object of the verb, and the list follows a complete clause.)

Colons Before Quotations

Colons introduce quotations that are formal or lengthy

Correct: Dickens wrote: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."
(Formal quotation)

Colons introduce quotations that do **not** begin with a "he said/she said" clause.

Correct: Alexandra took the microphone: "Your honor, I object."
(Clause preceding quotation does not have a verb which denotes speaking.

In all cases, the colon **precedes** the quotation marks.

QUOTATION MARKS

Quotation marks normally come in pairs to set off a portion of text for a variety of purposes. Paired single quotation marks are sometimes used as well.

Quotations Marks in Direct Quotations

When a person or work is quoted directly and word for word, the quotation is placed in quotation marks. An indirect quotation in which the substance but not the exact wording is used does not take quotation marks.

Correct: Macbeth said, "All our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death."
(A direct quotation)
Incorrect: Macbeth said that "Their past actions lead fools to death."
(Contains the substance, but not exact words. Quotation marks are not used.)
Correct: Macbeth said that their past actions lead fools to death.

Question Marks or Exclamation Points in Quotations

If a **question** or **exclamation** is quoted **directly**, the quotation contains the question mark or exclamation point. If the question or exclamation is at the end of the quotation, the question mark or exclamation point comes before the closing quotation mark.

Incorrect: "Look at that"! he exclaimed. "Did you see that"?
Correct: "Look at that!" he exclaimed. "Did you see that?"
(Question mark or exclamation point comes before the quotation mark.)

A question mark can be found outside the quotation mark **if** the sentence is asking **about** a quotation, but the quotation itself is not a question.
Incorrect: Did Mark Antony say, "Friends, Romans, countrymen?"
(A question is not being quoted. The speaker is **asking** about a quotation.)
Correct: Did Mark Antony say, "Friends, Romans, countrymen"?

QUOTATION MARKS CONT.

Other Punctuation Marks with Quotation Marks

Always place a comma or period before beginning or ending quotation marks.

Incorrect: "Ned", he requested", please take this to Mr. Green".
Correct: "Ned," he requested,"please take this to Mr. Green."
Always place a colon or semicolon **after** ending quotation marks. (This is relatively rare.)
Correct: George claimed, "I have twenty points"; Bill said he only had twelve.

Quotation Marks in Dialogue
Begin a **new paragraph** with **every** change of speaker.

Incorrect:
"Hello, Mary," Jeffrey stammered. "Hi, Jeffrey, how are you?" "Uh, fine. What have you been doing lately?"
Correct:
"Hello, Mary," Jeffrey stammered.
"Hi, Jeffrey, how are you?"
"Uh, fine. What have you been doing lately?“

For quotations **longer** than a single paragraph, put quotation marks at the **beginning** of each paragraph but **only** at the end of the **final** quoted word.

UNDERLINING AND ITALICIZING

Underlining words and ***Italicizing*** words in standard written English mean **the same thing. Handwriting and typing normally show underlining. Typesetting for print usually uses italics. Most computers can go either way.**
Whichever way is chosen, be consistent and keep the same style throughout.

Underlining or Italicizing Titles
Titles of **longer** written works are underlined or italicized.
Longer written works include books, full-length plays, films, longer musical compositions, and periodicals.
Incorrect (speaking of the musical): I like Oklahoma.
(The state?)
Incorrect: I like "Oklahoma."
(The song?)
Correct: I like *Oklahoma*. OR
I like Oklahoma.
(The title of a longer work is italicized or underlined.)
Correct: I liked *Macbeth*, but not Macbeth.
(I liked the **play** Macbeth, but not the character of that name.)

Underlining or Italicizing Names
Underline the specific name of individual air, sea, space, and land craft.
Examples:
Challenger (space)
Captain Bligh commanded the *Bounty* (sea)
He called the Chevy Greased *Lightning*. (land)

If an italicized or underlined name appears in the title of a work or some other writing which is otherwise italicized or underlined, the writer has a **choice**:
1**. Normally the specific item reverts to standard type. This is always done in bibliographies and formal references.**
Example: Mutiny on the Bounty by Nordhoff and Hall
(Book title contains name of ship)

DASHES - AND (PARENTHESES)

Dashes and Parentheses are both used to show an interruption in thought or some kind of aside. Dashes are more emphatic. Parentheses are normally paired. Both should be used sparingly or they become a distraction. Parentheses also have a few special uses.

Dashes
A **dash** is a **long** horizontal mark twice the length of a hyphen. On most typewriters and computers dashes are represented by typing two hyphens.
Dashes are **emphatic**. They are nearly like emphatic parentheses.
To be effective, dashes, like exclamation points, should not be overused.
Dashes indicate an **abrupt change of thought.**
Sometimes they set off a clause or phrase for emphasis or dramatic effect.
Change of thought: I loved the dinner last night--have you ever been to Chez Louis?
Set off statement for emphasis: Punctuation marks can be confusing--commas, dashes, hyphens, colons!

Parentheses
Parentheses set off material not essential to the meaning of the text.
They are used for asides and explanations when the material is not essential or if it is made up of more than one sentence.
Parentheses may contain a complete sentence or sentences.

Example: He had to go through the usual process to get his bus driver's license (police and FBI check, reference check, motor vehicle check, written exam, mechanical test, and driving test).
(This could be set off by a colon for more emphasis since it is a list or by a dash for strong emphasis. But since the sentence says "the usual process," there is no need to emphasize anything.)

HYPHEN – THE LONGER DASH

A **hyphen** is a short horizontal line used **within** words. (The longer **dash** is used **between** words.)
Hyphens are used in a variety of situations.

Numbers Written Out Using Hyphens
Use a hyphen between the **tens** and **units** number when writing out the numbers twenty-one to ninety-nine in words. Just like that!
Do **not** use hyphens for other numbers.
Incorrect: Two-hundred-fifty-six
Correct: Two hundred fifty-six
(Hyphen between tens and units only)

Use a hyphen between the numerator and denominator when a fraction is written out in words **and** the fraction is an **adjective**.
Incorrect: Two-thirds of the Senate overrode the veto.
(Here two thirds is a noun, not an adjective.)
Correct: Two thirds of the Senate overrode the veto.
Incorrect: A two thirds majority overrode the veto.
(Here two thirds is an adjective modifying majority.)
Correct: A two-thirds majority overrode the veto.

Hyphenated Prefixes and Suffixes
Use a hyphen after a prefix followed by a proper noun or proper adjective.
Examples: mid-June pre-Columbian Afro-American
Use a hyphen in words beginning with the prefixes all-, ex- (meaning "former"), and self- and in words ending with the suffix -elect.
Incorrect: selfpropelled ex-treme
(Prefix self- needs hyphen. The prefix in extreme does not mean "former.")
Correct: all-knowing ex-wife self-propelled mayor-elect extreme exacting
Hyphenated Compound Words
Hyphens are used internally in some compound words to separate the words forming the compound word.
Examples: merry-go-round editor-in-chief

HYPHEN – THE LONGER DASH CONT.

When unsure of the hyphenation of such words, check a dictionary. Usage may vary. As some words are more widely used, the hyphen in dropped. For example, in the early 1800's the word blackbird was usually spelled black-bird. Now the hyphen has been dropped

Hyphens connect the words of a **compound modifier** that comes **before** the word being modified. Hyphens are not used this way with compound parts ending in -ly or made up of proper nouns or proper adjectives.

Incorrect: He is a well respected man.

Correct: He is a well-respected man.

(A compound modifier before the noun.)

Incorrect: That man is well-respected.

Correct: That man is well respected.

(The modifier follows the noun, no hyphen.)

Incorrect: That was a badly-punctuated sentence.

Correct: That was a badly punctuated sentence.

(Modifier ends in -ly, no hyphen.)

APOSTROPHES SHOWING POSSESSION

An **apostrophe** is normally used with the letter **s** to show ownership or possession.
With most singular nouns, simply add an apostrophe plus the letter **s** to do this.
An apostrophe plus s is **never** added to make a noun plural--even a proper noun.

Incorrect: This is Joans jacket.
(Possessive form needs the apostrophe)
Correct: This is Joan's jacket.
Incorrect: He ate four hot dog's at the picnic.
(Not possessive; use no apostrophe to make a noun plural.)
Correct: He ate four hot dogs at the picnic.
Incorrect: We saw the Smith's at the picnic.
(Not possessive; use no apostrophe to make a name plural.)
Correct: We saw the Smiths at the picnic.

Plural Possessives
To make most nouns plural, add an -s or -es. The -es is added to words that end in an s or z sound.
Do not use an apostrophe.
Examples: lands dresses taxes quizzes
Incorrect: Twenty dog's were in the pack.
Correct: Twenty dogs were in the pack.
To make a **plural** noun **possessive**, simply add an **apostrophe** to the word. If the plural does not end in an **s,** then add an apostrophe plus **s**.
Examples: The girls' dresses
(The dresses belonging to the girls.
The Wilsons' house
(The Wilsons live in the house.)
The men's room
(Plural does not end in s.)

APOSTROPHES SHOWING POSSESSION CONT.

Apostrophes with Possessives of More than One Owner
To show that more than one person **share** the **same** item together, make **only** the **last** owner in the series possessive.

Examples: Ken and Larry's ice cream
(They share the same ice cream.)
John and Mary's pet cats
(They share the same cats.)

To show that there are similar items which are owned individually by different owners, make each owner in the series possessive.
Example: John's and Mary's pet cats.
(They each have their own pet cat or cats.)

Apostrophes with *Italicized* or Underlined Items

Letters, numbers, symbols, and words used as themselves are italicized or underlined.
When these items are made **plural**, the plural is shown by adding **apostrophe s** to the underlined or italicized item. The **apostrophe** and s are not italicized or underlined.
Acronyms are also made plural by adding apostrophe s. Some authorities do not recognize this rule.
These two instances are the only times in English when adding an apostrophe plus s makes something plural.

Examples: Don't forget to dot your i's.
(Letter as a letter)
His 7's look like 2's.
(Number as number)
His &'s look like 8's.
(Symbol as symbol)
I find the thee's and thou's in older writing hard to follow.
(Words as words)

ELLIPSIS...

The **ellipsis** is three periods in a row. It signifies that words or figures are missing.
Most frequently an ellipsis is used with quotations. It may come at the middle or end of a quotation. It may be used at the beginning of a quotation if the quotation begins mid-sentence and there is an appropriate lead-in.

In mathematics an ellipsis shows that numbers have been left out. This is usually used in decimals, series, and matrices.

Quotation:"Sometimes I'm ancient. I'm afraid of children my own age. They kill each other. Did it always use to be that way? My uncle says no. Six of my friends have been shot in the last year alone. Ten of them died in car wrecks. I'm afraid of them and they don't like me because I'm afraid. My uncle says his grandfather remembered when children didn't kill each other. But that was a long time ago when they had things different. They believed in responsibility, my uncle says.“

Ellipsis in middle: "I'm afraid of children my own age. They kill each other. Did it always use to be that way? My uncle says no...My uncle says his grandfather remembered when children didn't kill each other. But that was a long time ago when they had things different. They believed in responsibility, my uncle says.“

Ellipsis at end: "My uncle says his grandfather remembered when children didn't kill each other. But that was a long time ago..."
(Some authorities use four periods instead of three when the ellipsis is at the end or if more than a paragraph has been left out.)

Ellipsis at beginning: Clarisse said her uncle's grandfather "...remembered when children did not kill each other.“

Mathematical: 3.14159...

[BRACKETS]

Brackets, or crotchets, are always used in pairs to mark off material inserted into a quotation which is not part of the original quotation. The use of brackets should be limited, but may include short references, short definitions, a short piece of information which clarifies the quotation, or an editorial comment.

The Latin word **sic**, which means "thus" or "so," is often put into brackets to indicate a misspelling or some other misuse of language in the original quotation.

Brackets are also used in dictionaries, glossaries, and word lists to show word origins and etymologies.
Brackets may be used to show parenthetical information for material already inside parentheses.

Editorial insertion:
Then Ceres asked: Tell me, heavenly bow,
If Venus or her son [Cupid], as thou dost know,
Do now attend the queen.
(Clarifies the meaning)

Misspelling in original quotation:
"Mi dere Jo I hope u r write [sic] well."

Word origin: Brackets [L.]
(The word brackets comes from Latin.)

Parentheses within parentheses: (Charles Dickens [1812-1870] had been trained as a stenographer.)