

**Ministry of Higher Education and
Scientific Research/University of Tikrit
College of Education for Humanities
Department of English
Third Stage
Evening and Morning Studies**



Punctuation Marks

By

Dr. Marwan Mizher Sahab

1. Introduction

Writing is an important skill to convey meaning. In their writing, people may write well but struggle from the fear of punctuation and grammar. They know how to pre-write, organize, and revise, but proofreading for punctuation and grammar causes them difficulties. There is no need to fear these conventions of standard written English. In fact, these conventions can help writers become more effective communicators.

Many people believe that punctuation rules are rigid commandments, and that only the experts know all the rules. Students may be surprised to learn, however, that it is not the experts but rather educated speakers and writers, such as ourselves, who have established the practices have to know the rules of punctuation.

In other words, over the years, ...good writers have used punctuation in ways that have made their messages clear to their readers. Writers have agreed to follow these practices because they have proven to be so effective. The rules of punctuation are not static; they have changed throughout the years, and will continue to change.

The rules of punctuation are created and maintained by writers to help make their prose more effective, and their exact meaning changes over time. This research discusses the most useful punctuation marks that are used in writing. Instead of listing many rules, as a grammar book does, these various marks are presented and discussed in general to get a sense of how to use them in prose.

Importance of Punctuations Marks

There is no doubt about punctuation marks importance. It has a great importance in writing; it facilitates the reading of a reader, and prevent confusion and overlap between the sentence and words, and if a good writer uses them, and put them in their right positions, they will help the reader to understand what is written. If the writer neglected these signs, used or abused and did not put them in their right positions, it will be difficult to read for the reader, and may lead to misunderstand what is written.

Marks of punctuation have a very important role in giving the intended meaning to the language. He adds that the use of the wrong placement of such marks can change the meaning of the sentence completely and sometimes even convert the sentence to complete nonsense.

Punctuation Marks and their Usages

In this research, we will deal with fourteen punctuation marks that are considered mostly used in writing.

1. Comma (,)

1- When a subordinate (less important) clause comes before the principal clause. e.g. If you do not go, help me.

2- To separate phrases in apposition (describing the same Person or thing mentioned earlier) from the rest of sentence. e.g. Mr. Brwon, the doctor, said that he travelled to Canda.

3- To separate items in the same list. e.g. She travelled to America , Canda, and Australia. (Net: 1)

2. full stop (.)

1- A full stop is used at the end of the sentence and the next sentence begins with a capital letter

e.g. Ali felt tired. He went to bed.

2- an abbreviation ends in a full stop and with acronyms. e.g. Etcetera→ etc. Mr. B.B.C. (Net:3)

3. Colon (:)

1- The use of a colon indicates that what follows is an explanation of what precedes it. e.g. They have some news about the story: John's father has arrived.

2- It is also used to introduce a list of the items. e.g. To travel, you need the following items: a passport, a visa, an application and the correct fee (Net:1).

4. Semi colon (;)

1- A semi colon is used to join two independent but related clauses or sentences. e.g. She is a good writer; she has published several books.

2- It can also separate clauses of conjunctive adverbs such as however, therefore, moreover... e.g. We shouldn't go to the fair; however, I do hear that they have good funnel cakes (Net:2).

5. Quotation mark (‘ ’)

1- Quotation marks are used for material that is quoted or emphasized.

e.g. Ali said, ‘I cannot finish my quiz’

2- Quotation marks are used to set off the title of short works of writing. e.g. the television show, ‘Cheers’.

6. Apostrophe (’)

1-An apostrophe is used to refer to possessive singular or plural. e.g. The boy's books. (singular) e.g. The boys' books. (plural)

2-An apostrophe is used always to be included when telling the time. e.g. It is eight o'clock. *short for: (eight of the clock)

3-An apostrophe is used to show letters are missing in words (omission). e.g. You're→ You are e.g. I'm→ I am (Truss:2003).

7. Exclamation mark (!)

1- An exclamation mark is used to signal the expression of a strong emotions such as: a-Excitement: e.g. I can't wait! b-Panic: Ex/ Help me!

2- An exclamation mark is used to add an emphasis to the sentence. e.g. There's a fly in my Soup. There's a fly in my Soup! (Snooks:2002).

8. Ellipsis (...)

1-An ellipsis is used to show that the speaker has been cut off abruptly(interrupted).
e.g. ‘Whatever you do, don't...’

2-An ellipsis is used to indicate a trailing off in speech or thought. e.g. We could do this ... or maybe that...

9. slash (/)

1-Slash is used with fractions.

e.g. $1/2$ = one-half e. g. $2/3$ = two-third

2- Use a slash to separate the day, month, and a year in dates. e.g. He was born on 18/3/1987

10. Question mark (?)

1-Ues question mark at the end of any direct questions. e.g. Who is your teacher?

2-Use a question mark at the end of a tag question (a statement followed by a short question). e.g. You speak English, don't you?(Jane:2008)

11. Hyphen (-)

1-A hyphen may separate, in some cases, the prefix from the second part of words.
e.g. co-opt, T-shirt.

2-A hyphen may join some compound words. e.g. twenty-one. (ibid)

12. Parentheses (())

1-parentheses or brackets are often used to include extra or additional information into a sentence. e.g. The library (which was built in the seventeenth century) needs to be repaired.

2-Parentheses give additional, but non-essential information in a sentence. e.g. France, America, and Spanish (but not Chinese) may be studied here.(Net:2)

13.Square Brackets ([])

1-Square brackets are used to clarification, to help the reader understands the sentence. e.g. She drove 60 [mile per hour] on the highway to town. (Net: 3)

14. Dash

(Em—Dash, En–Dash) 1-Em—Dash is used to indicate a break, often informally, or to add Parenthetical information.