



## QUICK GUIDE: PUNCTUATION

Symbol	Name	Explanation	Example
.	Period	Ends declarative sentences.	This sentence ends with a period.
,	Comma	Provides a pause in the middle of a sentence. Be sure to use commas sparingly as there are many other ways to break up ideas.	I wanted to write a sentence without a comma, but that defeats the purpose of this handout.
?	Question Mark	Ends interrogative sentences.	Do you know what a question mark is?
!	Exclamation Point	Ends exclamatory sentences.	We love exclamation points!
'	Apostrophe	Takes the place of omitted letters or shows possession.	This sentence's focus is the apostrophe.
""	Quotation Marks	Indicates spoken dialogue or the presence of another author's work.	"You should always add a quotation," remarked Ann.
()	Parentheses	Used to add brief explanations.	Parentheses (although not commonly used in academic writing) are useful punctuation marks.
[]	Brackets	Indicate a necessary clarification in a sentence or a change to quotation.	"Although he [the butcher] seems to be a minor character in the work, [the butcher] provides useful insight into the common business practices of the time."
:	Colon	Introduces a list or quotation.	Carrie had the following in her bag: Chapstick, a pen, an apple, and her wallet.
;	Semicolon	Separates two independent clauses in a compound sentence.	The wallet comes in two sizes; those sizes come in either black or brown.
...	Ellipsis	Used to omit unnecessary sections of a quotation.	"Dampened by years of self-distrust, . . . those energies awaken with startling power and poignancy" (Bryan, Cameron, and Allen 188).

—	Em dash	Serves a similar purpose to parentheses. Introduces an anecdotal idea or otherwise breaks up sentences.	The Fourth of July—one of ten federal holidays in the U.S.—commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
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