Common Punctuation Marks



The primary function of punctuation marks is for the reader to most effectively understand the information presented.

Periods are used at the end of a sentence or abbreviation.

Dumbledore told Harry that words are the most inexhaustible form of magic.

Mrs. Mr. Dr. a.m.

Exclamation Points are used to show excitement or a command.

Do not move from that spot!

Good to see you!

?

Question Marks are used at the end of a question.

Would you like anything from the trolley?

How are you today?

9

Apostrophes serve several purposes. They show possession. They also show omission of letters in contractions.

A student's paper

Dolores' teacups

Can't Won't He's You're

6699

Quotation Marks surround words spoken aloud and indicate an article title, chapter in a book, and the name of a short story, song, or poem.

"It's a hot day," Sally said.
"The Raven"

"The Wheels on the Bus"

•

Colons are used at the end of a complete statement to introduce a list, a long, block quotation, or an explanation.

We will need the following items: sunscreen, towels, and a change of clothes.

There are two major events that happen for Thanksgiving: The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the National Dog Show.



•

Semi-Colons are used between two complete sentences to show a relationship. They are also used instead of commas when listing items that are long or contain commas.

The hurricane caused record flooding for the state; it also knocked out power for millions.

We visited Miami, FL; Aspen, CO; and Reno, NV.

Dashes signal a phrase that is longer than a comma.

Some of you — I won't mention you by name — cheated on this test.



Hyphens connect two words that act as a single unit describing a noun

I admire her well-rounded personality.



Parentheses set off extra information from the rest of the sentence.

The guy at the Hamburger House (my favorite place to eat) asked me out on a date.



Ellipses within a direct quote indicates omitted words.

"Sometimes at night Ariene would get out of bed and begin to wander...she would slip out from beneath the covers and begin to walk around in the dark" (McCrumb 190).



Commas serve a specific purpose in allowing the reader to best understand the text that is written.

See the separate **Comma Handout** for all of the many roles of the comma.