



Punctuation

Punctuation is used to guide the reader through the writer's sentences. Often it indicates the tone of the sentence.

Commas (,) help readers understand writing by indicating pauses between sections of a sentence (much like temporary halts or breaths in speech).

Semicolons (;) can be used between closely linked independent clauses. They are almost like periods, except that they cannot appear at the end of a sentence. They can also be used to separate items in a series when the listed items already have commas (example: Toronto, ON; Calgary, AB; Montréal, QC; and Victoria, BC).

Colons (:) are meant to focus the reader's attention on the words that follow them. Colons can also be used when indicating examples and long quotations that have been formally introduced.

Question Marks (?) are often used as end-punctuation, meaning that when used, they are the last thing to appear in a sentence. They indicate a direct question or doubt. Question marks can also be used after individual parts in a series of questions.

Exclamation Points (!) are used at the end of sentences to indicate emphasis or strong feelings, such as surprise or disbelief. Exclamation points are usually inappropriate in formal prose. **Warning:** Do not combine exclamation points with question mark! Do not use more than one exclamation after a sentence!

How do I incorporate end-punctuation in quotations?

When using punctuation at the end of quotations, there are general rules about what goes where:

- Always place a comma (,) or a period (.) before the final quotation mark. "He's very intelligent."
If you are citing material, however, place the comma or period after the citation. "He's very intelligent" (Smith 13).
- Always put colons (:) and semicolons (;) outside of the closing quotation. She said that "the truth is hard to hide"; she then left the room.
- Question marks (?) and exclamation points (!) can either go between or outside of quotation marks depending on whether or not they are included in the original quotation.