

Punctuation Rule Sheet

End Punctuation

Rule 1: Use a period at the end of a declarative sentence. (statement)

Rule 2: Use a period at the end of an imperative sentence. (command)

Rule 3: Use a question mark at the end of the interrogative sentence. (question)

Rule 4: Use an exclamation point at the end of an exclamatory sentence. (strong feeling)

Rule 5: Use an exclamation point at the end of an interjection. (strong emotion/one or two words)

Commas

Rule 1: Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.

Rule 2: Use a comma to show a pause after an introductory word.

Rule 3: Use a comma after two or more prepositional phrases at the beginning of a sentence.

Rule 4: Use commas to set off words that interrupt the flow of thought in a sentence.

Rule 5: Use commas to set off names use in direct address.

Rule 6: Use a comma before *and or*, or *but* when it joins simple sentences into a compound sentence.

Rule 7: Use a comma after the salutation of a friendly letter and after the closing of both a friendly letter and a business letter.

Rule 8: Use a comma to prevent a misreading.

Rule 9: Use commas before and after the year when it is used with both the month and the day. Do not use a comma if only the month and the year or the month and the day are given.

Rule 10: Use commas before or after the name of a state or a country when it is used with the name of a city. Do not use a comma after the state postal abbreviation followed by a ZIP code.

Rule 11: Use a comma or pair of commas to set off an abbreviated title or degree following a person's name.

Rule 12: Use a comma or pair of commas to set off *too* when *too* means "also."

Rule 13: Use a comma or pair of commas to set off a direct quotation.

Semicolons and colons

Rule 1: Use a semicolon to join parts of a compound sentence when a conjunction such as *and*, *but*, or *or* is not used. Remember that a compound sentence has two or more simple sentences that are joined by a conjunction.

Rule 2: Use a colon to introduce a list of items that ends a sentence. Use a phrase such as *these*, *the following*, or *as follows* before the list.

Rule 3: Use a colon to separate the hour from the minute when you write the time of day.

Rule 4: Use a colon after the salutation of a business letter.

Quotation marks and italics

Rule 1: Use quotation marks before and after a direct quotation.

Rule 2: Use quotation marks around each part of an interrupted quotation.

Rule 3: Use a comma or commas to separate a phrase such as *he said* from the quotation itself. Place the comma outside opening quotation marks but inside closing quotation marks.

Rule 4: Place a period inside closing quotation marks.

Rule 5: Place a question mark or an exclamation mark inside the quotation marks when it is part of the quotation.

Rule 6: Place a question mark or an exclamation mark outside the quotation marks when it is part of the entire sentence but not part of the quotation.

Rule 7: Use quotation marks for the title of a short story, essay, poem, song, magazine, or newspaper article, or book chapter.

Rule 8: Use italics (underlining) to identify the title of a book, play, film, television series, magazine, or newspaper.

Apostrophes and Hyphens

Rule 1: Use an apostrophe and an –s('s) to form the possessive of a singular noun.

Rule 2: Use an apostrophe and an –s ('s) to form the possessive of a plural noun that does not end in –s.

Rule 3: Use an apostrophe alone to form the possessive of a plural noun that ends in –s.

Rule 4: Use an apostrophe to replace letters that have been omitted in a contraction. A contraction is a word that is made by combining two words into one and leaving out one or more letters.

Rule 5: use a hyphen to show the division of a word at the end of a line. Always divide a word between syllables.

Rule 6: Use a hyphen in compound numbers.

Rule 7: Use a hyphen or hyphens in certain compound nouns.

Abbreviations

Rule 1: Abbreviate the titles *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Ms.*, and *Dr.* before a person's name. also abbreviate the professional or academic degrees that follow a person's name, as well as the titles *Jr.* and *Sr.*

Rule 2: Use all capital letters and no periods for abbreviations that are pronounced letter by letter or as words. Exceptions are *U. S.* and *Washington D. C.*, which do use periods.

Rule 3: Use the abbreviations *A.M.* (*ante meridiem*, "before noon") and *P.M.* (*post meridiem*, "after noon") for exact times. For dates use *B.C.* (before Christ) and, sometimes, *A.D.* (*anno Domini*, "in the year of the Lord," after Christ).

Rule 4: Abbreviate calendar items only in charts and lists.

Rule 5: In scientific writing, abbreviate units of measure. Use periods with abbreviations of English units but not of metric units.

Rule 6: On envelopes abbreviate the words that refer to streets in street names. Spell them out everywhere else.

Rule 7: On envelopes use state postal service abbreviations for the names of states. Everywhere else, spell out state names.

Numbers

Rule 1: Spell out numbers that you can write in one or two words.

Rule 2: Use numerals for numbers of more than two words.

Rule 3: Spell out any number that begins a sentence or reword the sentence so that it does not begin with a number.

Rule 4: Write a very large number in numerals followed by the word *million* or *billion*.

Rule 5: If related numbers appear in the same sentence, use all numerals even though you might spell out one of the numbers if it appeared alone.

Rule 6: Spell out ordinal numbers (such as *first*, *second*, and *third*).

Rule 7: Use words to express the time of day unless you are writing the exact time with the abbreviation A.M. or P.M.

Rule 8: Use numerals to express dates, house and street numbers, apartment and room numbers, telephone numbers, page numbers, amounts of money of more than two words, and percentages. Write out the word percent.