

Review: Common punctuation marks

Punctuation is the practice of putting proper stops and marks in writing. Punctuation makes the meaning of a sentence clear. In some cases, a wrongly used punctuation mark can change the entire meaning of the sentence.

In this article, we will review common punctuation marks in English.

Full stop

The full stop is used at the end of a statement, order, request or command. The full stop indicates a complete pause.

Examples:

Look here.

Please help me.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.

The full stop is also used in abbreviations. This is common in American English.

Comma

The comma indicates a shorter pause. It is used to separate words in a list.

I have planted roses, jasmines, lilies, dahlias and sunflowers in the garden.

Sometimes we use the comma to separate clauses in a sentence.

After he finished his studies, he went abroad. (Here the comma separates the two clauses.)

Colon

The colon is used to introduce a list of examples:

There are three tenses: the present tense, the past tense and the future tense.

There are three types of rocks: sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic.

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Question mark

The question mark is used at the end of questions.

What is your name?

Where does she work?

Exclamation mark

The exclamation mark is used after exclamatory words or sentences.

Alas! We have lost.

What a lovely picture!

Hyphen

The hyphen is used to connect the parts of a compound word.

Examples are: living-room, one-man show etc.

Note that hyphens are disappearing. Many compound words are now written as one word with no hyphen between them.

Dash

The dash is sometimes used instead of a colon.