



INTRODUCTION TO GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS Section No.

PUNCTUATION DEVELOPMENT 208

*imaginewhatajobitwouldbetodecipherletalonetounderstandaparagraphwithoutithopeless
yousaywhysoitisevenifthewordsarewellknownliketobeornotthatisthequestionwilliamshakespeare
15641616*

NOPUNCTUATIONNOWORDSPACINGNOCAPITALIZATION

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*Imagine what a job it would be to understand a paragraph without it Hopeless you say Why so it
is even if the words are well known like To be or not that is the question William Shakespeare
1564 1616*

NO PUNCTUATION JUST WORD SPACING AND CAPITALIZATION

*Imagine what a job it would be to decipher, let alone to understand, a paragraph without it.
Hopeless, you say? Why, so it is—even if the words are well known, like: "To be or not to be . . .
that is the question." (William Shakespeare, 1564-1616).*

PUNCTUATION, WORD SPACING, AND CAPITALIZATION

*(Now imagine how much more difficult it would be if some of the words were misused
or misspelled. And please note that no word breaks have been shown at the ends of the
lines because the material is set ragged-right. Both of these conventions that are needed
to help extract the meaning from the writing.)*

Evolution Has Improved Writing

The above show just how important punctuation, capitalization, word spaces, etc. are to improve readability.

The words in the first two samples are depicted without word spaces, which we now know is a great help to understanding. The earliest writing, however, showed no spaces between words, as in these first two examples.

Also, early manuscripts were all capital letters. Lower case

evolved as the scribes recopied materials.

Today, word-groups representing a thought—sentences—are identified at the start by a capital letter and at the end by a period.

Even that is something we must not take for granted. The first simple punctuation, consisting of vertical lines between phrases, is found in the Semitic script stone inscriptions from 850 B.C., however the idea wasn't common in the western writings

until the middle ages.

In computerized composition, we continue to see with increasing speed, modification of the use of existing punctuation as well as development and use of newer forms.

Most notable is the interrobang or "interbang", a combination of an explanation mark ("bang" or "banger" and the question mark (interrogatory). The new mark is designed to indicate an exclamatory question.

The word *punctuation* comes from the Latin *pungere*, “to puncture or prick.” A punctuation mark is a spot that has been pricked by an instrument (the past participle of *pungere* is *punctus*).

The purpose of punctuation is to help readers understand meaning. It clarifies thoughts and ideas by identifying the relationship of words to each other. Though they are apparently arbitrary, the rules to which punctuation must conform have developed through practice over the years. They represent agreements among literate people about how to use our language in writing.

If you think of writing as merely the visible translation of speech, then punctuation becomes easy. The pauses in speaking are signaled by marks in writing.

- A comma is the equivalent of a brief pause.
- A period is a longer pause.
- A dash is a different kind of pause, indicating an interruption of a thought. The

inflection of the voice is also translated into visible form in writing.

- A question mark suggests the rising of the voice at the end of a query.
- An exclamation point indicates emphasis. The other punctuation marks have

been evolved for other, equally functional purposes.

- Parentheses and brackets set off subsidiary thoughts.
- Quotation marks identify borrowed or special phrases.
- Colons mark the start of lists.
- Ellipses represent missing words.

Period (.) The word *period* comes from the Greek *periodos* meaning “cycle,” thus a complete thought or sentence. In the fifteenth century, the period was known as *jot*, from the Greek *iota*.

Here are a few do’s and don’ts for periods:

· Use them at the end of a sentence, unless they are replaced with exclamation points or question marks.

· Don’t use them at the end of headlines or subheads. They mark the end of a thought and may discourage the reader from continuing reading. In the United Kingdom periods are called *full stops* for good reason.

· Don’t use them in lists when the items are short and not complete sentences. More complex items and complete sentences may require periods, as in this list.

Exclamation

Point (!) Whenever the Romans wanted to say “gee-whiz;” “fantastic,” “wowie,” “cool,” or the equivalent. They said, “lo.” Scribes, saving precious space on the manuscript, wrote the two letters above each other. The “l” on top, the “o” beneath it. Soon the “o” filled in with ink and became a dot.

Don’t punctuate your writing with lots of “screamers” or “bangs” to increase emphasis. It looks cheap and overblown. Instead, use them with discretion.

¡ In Spanish, an upside-down exclamation point precedes a sentence ending with an exclamation point!

Question

Mark (?) The Latin word *quaestio* (“I ask”) was shortened by space-saving scribes to “QO” . . . and soon a “Q” above an “O.” The “Q” quickly degraded into a squiggle and the “O” into a little blob.

In Spanish, an upside-down question (¿) mark is placed at the beginning of a

sentence that ends in a regular question mark. A useful warning alerting the reader, especially when reading aloud.

Colon (:) A colon might be thought of as a divider. It can be used:

- to introduce a list, as it just was
- in place of such expressions as *for instance*, *as follows*, *namely*, *to wit*, *viz*, *for example*, and *that is*
- to introduce a quotation or extract in dialogue
- to separate minutes from hours
- to set off a salutation in a letter

A colon is usually followed by a lowercase letter, especially if what follows is an incomplete sentence. It may, however, be followed by a capital if it introduces dialogue or a formal statement.

Semicolon (;) Think of the semicolon as a break in continuity greater than that implied by a comma. Most frequently it is used to separate the two main clauses of a compound sentence when they are not linked by a conjunction. It is also used to separate items in a series when commas would not be clear enough.

Comma (,) The word comma comes from the Greek *komma* (“segment clause”), indicating a part of a sentence. In the fifteenth century it was also known as a *tittle*, from the Latin *titulus* (“label, title”). In early manuscripts commas appeared as a full slash mark, or solidus (*/*), but later shrank to today’s size.

Commas are used as needed for clarity to separate thoughts from each other and to make sentences less unwieldy. There are, however, different rationales for the use of commas, and probably no two editors would agree in every instance. Here are some common uses:

- after a conjunction in a compound sentence
- to distinguish a nonrestrictive phrase or clause (one that could be omitted without changing the meaning)
- to separate three or more elements in a series
- to set off parenthetical remarks
- to separate month and day from year in month/day/year sequences
- to set off expressions like *namely*, *for example*, and *that is*
- for words in opposition (unless they have a restrictive function)—for example, “Mr. Gold, my neighbor, ...”

Parentheses () Parentheses, nicknamed *parens*, are used for separating subsidiary phrases (or background information) from the flow of text. To enclose secondary parenthetical expressions within parentheses, use brackets (going from parentheses to brackets ([like this])). Braces provide a third degree of enclosure or sign of aggregation— ([{ }])—but it is best to avoid this situation altogether.

All punctuation should occur inside the parentheses if the item is a sentence. Avoid commas or semicolons before the opening parenthesis, unless the parentheses are used for numbers in a list.

Hyphen (-) Hyphens link words together, but must be used with care because interpretation can be affected by the inclusion (or lack) of a hyphen. Follow the practice suggested by a good, up-to-date dictionary.

Dashes (—) There are two main kinds of dashes: the long em-dash and the short en-dash. There are also, two-em and three-em dashes, but these are used infrequently (for missing

letters and missing words respectively).

The em-dash is a full square of the type size. One of its main uses is to signal sudden changes in tone. Or it may be used instead of parentheses to set off a clause or phrase. If you can't type em-dash on your equipment, you can use two hyphens in a row (--).

In general, use the em-dash sparingly, for it attracts attention to itself and can be disturbing.

An en-dash is only one-half of the square of the type size and resembles a hyphen. It is used primarily to represent missing but implied items in a series ("2-4" means the numbers 2 through 4). If your equipment doesn't have an en-dash, use a hyphen instead.

Solidus (/) Also, known as a *slash*, *slant*, *shilling mark*, *diagonal*, or *virgule*, the solidus originally functioned as a comma. Today its major uses are:

- separating the divisor from the dividend in fractions (1/2)
- separating the days, months, and years in dates (11/17/ 1942)
- implying the word "per" (\$3/100)
- indicating choice (yes/no)
- indicating line ends when poetry is shown run-in (i.e., in a continuous stream rather than line by line)

Sometimes a vertical bar (|) may be used instead of the slanted solidus for aesthetic reasons.

Apostrophe (') The main use for an apostrophe is in forming the possessive of a noun. Normally, this is done by adding an apostrophe and an "s." The main exception is in plural words ending with an "s," which only need an apostrophe after the last "s."

An apostrophe is also used in forming the plurals of certain abbreviations and letters written as letters. Keep in mind that if the word is italicized or underlined, the apostrophe and "s" are not italicized or underlined.

Ellipses (. . .) Ellipses, are three dots used to indicate the unfinished end of a spoken sentence or omission of a word or phrase from quoted material. If an entire sentence or paragraph is omitted, four dots should be used, with the first positioned as a normal period.

Quotation

Marks (" ") In the United States quotation marks begin with a ⁶⁶ (or sometimes a flopped ⁹⁹) and end with a ⁹⁹. Single quote marks are used for quotations within quotations.

Guillemets (« ») These marks are used instead of quotes in French, Spanish, and Italian. In most languages, quotation marks or their equivalent are used:

- to set off direct dialogue
- to indicate a quotation from another source
- to denote irony or signal slang or obsolete terminology (but try not to overdo it and never use quote marks merely to give emphasis to an important word)
- to define letters or groups of letters discussed as letters
- for the titles of short poems, magazine articles, short stories, essays, comic strips, TV and radio programs, and songs (but the titles of books, long poems, periodicals, newspapers, movies, ballets, plays, paintings and sculpture—as well as the names of airplanes, ships, and trains—are either underscored or italicized)

Asterisk (*) The word asterisk comes from the Greek *asteriskos*, "little star." The asterick can be used:

- to represent a letter left out of a word
- as an itemizer (in place of the bullets used in this list, for instance)
- to signal a footnote

- to represent the word *born* when preceding a date
- as a prompt sign in computerese (where it is called a *splat*)

Crosshatch (#) Also known as a double *hashmark*, the crosshatch can be used as a substitute for the word *number* if it precedes the figure (#3) or a substitute for the word *pounds* if it follows a number (3#). It is also a proofreaders sign for “space” and a prompt sign in computerese (where it is called a *crunch*).

Dagger (≡) Also known as an obelisk (from the Greek *obelos*, “a spit, skewer”), the dagger is used as a signal for a footnote or as an indication that a word is obsolete. It can also represent the word *died* if it precedes a date.

(‡) A second level of this symbol is called the Double Dagger. It is used to further delineate levels in references.

Paragraph (¶) Also known as a *pilcrow* or *blind P*, this symbol is used to represent a paragraph. It is most commonly used in legal work and editing.

Section (§) This symbol indicates a subdivision of a paragraph in legal citations or a part of a chapter in a book.

Ampersand (&) This symbol comes from the Latin *et* (“and”). The two letters “e” and “t” eventually became linked into a single squiggle by scribes. The name *ampersand* comes from the way children learned the alphabet by rote in the nineteenth century. It is really a mispronunciation of four separate words in one: “and per se and.” The character itself offers incredible graphic variety and delight from typeface to typeface.

Underscoring and

Italicizing Neither underscoring (also known as *underlining*) nor italicizing is strictly punctuation. But the fundamental purpose of punctuation is to help the reader to understand, and in a similar way underscoring and italicization offer clues to meaning.

If you use underlining instead of italics, it should be uninterrupted. The whole phrase should be underlined, not just the individual words. But do not underline the final period or any other punctuation mark that ends the phrase or sentence.