



*The Million*  
DOLLAR  
*Woman*

## Punctuation Guide

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## Punctuation Guide

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### **Apostrophe**

An **apostrophe** is used to show that one or more letters have been left out of a word to form a contraction.

don't—*o* is left out; she'd—*woul* is left out; it's—*i* is left out

An apostrophe is also used to show that one or more letters or numbers have been left out of numerals or words which are spelled as they were actually spoken.

class of '85—19 is left out; good mornin'—*g* is left out

*Note:* When two apostrophes are called for in the same word, simply omit the second one

Follow closely the do's and don'ts (not don't's) on the checklist.

An apostrophe and *s* are used to form the plural of a letter, a number, a sign, or a word discussed as a word.

A—A's; C—C's; 8—8's.

You use too many and's in your writing.

The possessive form of singular nouns is usually made by adding an apostrophe and *s*

Spock's ears; John Lennon's assassination

*Note:* When a singular noun ends with an *s* or *z* sound, the possessive may be formed by adding just an apostrophe. When the singular noun is a one-syllable word, however, the possessive is usually formed by adding both an apostrophe and *s*.

Dallas' sports teams (or) Dallas's sports teams

Kiss's last concert; my boss's generosity (one-syllable)

The possessive form of plural nouns ending in *s* is usually made by adding just an: apostrophe.

For plural nouns not ending in *s*, an apostrophe and *s* must be added.

Joneses' great-grandfather; bosses' office; children's book

Remember! The word immediately before the apostrophe is the owner.

kid's guitar    kid is the owner

kids' guitar    kids are the owners

boss's office    boss is the owner

bosses' office    bosses are the owners

(Please don't write "My sisters' hip is out of joint.")

When possession is shared by more than one noun, use the possessive form for the last noun in the series.

VanClumpin, VanDiken, and VanTulip's fish (All three own the same fish.)

VanClumpin's, VanDiken's, and VanTulip's fish (Each guy owns his own fish.)

The possessive of a compound noun is formed by placing the possessive ending after the last word.

his mother-in-law's (singular) mouth; the secretary 'of state's (singular) wife

their mothers-in-law's (plural) husbands; the secretaries of state's (plural) wives

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The possessive of an indefinite pronoun is formed by placing an apostrophe the last word.  
everyone's; anyone's; somebody else's

An apostrophe is used with an adjective which is part of an expression indicating time or amount.  
yesterday's news; a day's wage; a month's pay

### **Asterisk**

The omission of one or more paragraphs from a quotation is indicated by centering three asterisks on one line. No other material should be printed on that line.

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An asterisk may be used in a short paper to indicate to the reader that additional information is included in a footnote at the bottom of the page.

His first year\* was very difficult.

\*1968

### **Diagonal**

A diagonal is used to form a fraction. Also, place a diagonal (also slash) between *and* and or to indicate that either is acceptable. (Avoid this use of the diagonal in formal writing.)

His hat size used to be 8-1/2; with his hair cut, it's 6-7/8.

Use calamine lotion and/or aloe to soothe those spider bites.

When quoting more than one line of poetry, use a diagonal at the end of each line.

The following three lines from Frost's "The Road Not Taken" hint at both the costs and rewards of nonconformism: **"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by/ and that has made all the difference."**

### **Capitalization**

Capitalize all proper nouns and all proper adjectives (adjectives derived from proper nouns). The chart below provides a quick overview of capitalization rules. The information following the chart explains specific or special uses of capitalization.

#### **Capitalization at a Glance**

Days of the week	Sunday, Monday, Tuesday
Months	June, July, August
Holidays, holy days	Thanksgiving, Easter, Hanukkah
Periods, events in history	Middle Ages, the Renaissance
Special events	the Battle of Bunker Hill
Political parties	Republican Party, Socialist Party
Official documents	Declaration of Independence
Trade names	Oscar Mayer hot dogs, Pontiac Sunbird
Formal epithets	Alexander the Great
Official titles	Mayor John Spitzer, Senator Kennedy
Official state nicknames	the Badger State, the Aloha State
Geographical names	
Planets, heavenly bodies	Earth, Jupiter, the Milky Way

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Continents	Australia, South America
Countries	Ireland, Grenada, Sri Lanka
States, provinces	Ohio, Utah, Nova Scotia
Counties	Juneau, Racine
Cities, towns, villages	El Paso, Burlington, Wonewoc
Streets, roads, highways	Park Avenue, Route 66, Interstate 90
Sections of a country or continent	the Southwest, the Far East
Landforms	the Rocky Mountains, the Sahara Desert
Bodies of water	Nile River, Lake Superior, Pumpkin Creek
Public areas	Yellowstone National Park

### ***Period***

A **period** is used to end a sentence which makes a statement, or which gives a command that is not used as an exclamation.

"That guy is coming over here."  
"Don't forget to smile when you talk."  
"Hello, Big Boy." "Hi"

It is not necessary to place a period after a statement which has parentheses around it and is part of another sentence.

Melissa gave Jim an earwich (an earwich is one piece of buttered bread slapped on each ear) and ran for her life.

An ellipsis (three periods) is used to show that one or more words have been omitted in a quotation. (Leave one space before and after each period when typing.)

"Give me your tired ... yearning to breathe free."

If an omission occurs at the end of a sentence, the ellipsis is placed after the period which marks the conclusion of the sentence.

"Ernest Hemingway was fond of fishing.... His understanding of that sport is demonstrated in many of his writings."

Note: If the quoted material is a complete sentence (even if it was not in the original) use a period, then an ellipsis.

An ellipsis also may be used to indicate a pause.

"Well, Dad, I . . . ah . . . ran out of gas ... had two flat tires ... and ah . . . there was a terrible snowstorm on the other side of town."

A period should be placed after an initial.

Dena W. Kloosterman, Thelma J. Slenk, D. H. Lawrence

A period is placed after each part of an abbreviation — unless the abbreviation is an acronym.

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An acronym is a word formed from the first (or first few) letters of words in a set phrase.

Abbreviations: Mr., Mrs., Ms., A.M., P.M., Dr., A.D., B.C.

Acronyms: WAC (Women's Army Corps); Radar (Radio Detecting and Ranging); NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)

When an abbreviation is the last word in a sentence, only one period should be used at the end of the sentence.

When she's nervous, she bites her nails, wrings her hands, picks at her clothes, etc.

Use a period as a decimal and to separate dollars and cents.

6.1 percent    28.9 percent    \$3,120.31

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### Comma

A comma may be used between two independent clauses which are joined by coordinating conjunctions such as these: *but, or, nor, for, yet, and, so*.

My friend smokes constantly, *but* he still condemns industry for its pollution.

*Note:* Do not confuse a sentence with a compound verb for a compound sentence.

**My friend *smokes but still condemns industry for its pollution.*** (This is a simple sentence with a compound verb; use no comma.)

Commas are used to separate individual words, phrases, or clauses in a series. (A series contains at least three items.)

I used a rapalla, a silver spoon, a nightcrawler harness, and a Swedish pimple.  
The bait I used included kernels of corn, minnows, bacon rind, larva, and spawn sacks.

*Note:* Do not use commas when the words in a series are connected with *or, nor, or and*. **I plan to catch bass *or* trout *or* sunfish.**

Commas are used to enclose an explanatory word or phrase inserted in a sentence. **Spawn, *or fish eggs,* are tremendous bait.**

An **appositive**, a specific kind of explanatory word or phrase, identifies or renames a preceding noun or pronoun. (Do not use commas with *restrictive appositives*. See the third example below.)

My father, *an expert angler,* uses spawn to catch brook trout. The objective, *to hook fish,* is easier to accomplish with spawn. The word *angleworm* applies to an earthworm used for fishing.

Commas are used to separate coordinate adjectives, adjectives which *equally* modify the same noun.

Trout gobble up the *small, soft, round* eggs.

Notice in the example above that no comma separates the last adjective from the noun.

*Most small* panfish also eat spawn.

In the example above, *most* and *small* are not separated by a comma because the two adjectives do *not* equally modify *panfish*. To determine whether adjectives modify equally, use these two tests:

- 1) Shift the order of the adjectives; if the sentence is clear, the adjectives modify equally. (If *most* and *small* were shifted in the example above, the sentence would be unclear.)
- 2) Insert *and* between the adjectives; if the sentence reads well, use a comma when *and* is omitted.

*Note:* If the first adjective modifies the second adjective *and* the noun, use a comma.

**He sat down on the *soft, velvet* cushion.**

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Commas are used to separate contrasted elements from the rest of the sentence and are often used to show word omission in certain grammatical constructions.

We need strong minds, not strong emotions, to solve our problems. Wise people learn from the mistakes of others; fools, from their own. (The comma is used to show that the word *learn* has been omitted from the second half of the sentence.)

A comma should separate an adverb clause or a long modifying phrase from the independent clause which follows it.

"If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance."

—*George Bernard Shaw*

*Note:* A comma is usually omitted if the phrase or adverb clause follows the independent clause.

"This will never be a civilized country until we expend more money for books than we do for chewing gum." —*Elbert Hubbard*

Commas are used to enclose **nonrestrictive** phrases and clauses. Nonrestrictive phrases or clauses are those which are not essential or necessary to the basic meaning of the sentence. **Restrictive** phrases or clauses — those which are needed in the sentence because they restrict or limit the meaning of the sentence — are not set off with commas. Compare the following examples with their nonrestrictive and restrictive phrases.

**Rozi**, who is making funny faces, **is my sister.**

(*Note:* The clause, *who is making funny faces, is* merely additional information; it is nonrestrictive [not required]. If the clause were left out of the sentence, the meaning of the sentence would remain clear since the name of the girl is given.)

**The girl** who is making funny faces **is my sister.**

(*Note:* This clause is restrictive. The clause, *who is making funny faces, is* needed to identify the girl.)

Compare the following examples:

The novelist *Sinclair Lewis* was the first American writer to win a Nobel Prize for literature. (restrictive)

Sinclair Lewis, *a novelist*, was the first American writer to win a Nobel Prize for literature. (nonrestrictive)

Commas are used to set off items in an address and items in a date.

They live at 2341 Pine Street, Willmar, Minnesota 56342, during the summer.

(*Note:* Do not use a comma to separate the state from the ZIP code.)

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Democracy would be dead by Wednesday, July 4, 1984, according to George Orwell. Orwell wrote that in July 1949 with pen in cheek. (Note. If only the month and year are given, it is not necessary to separate them with a comma.)

Commas are used to set off the exact words of the speaker from the rest of the sentence.

"Didn't you know," she exclaimed, "that dirty socks can stunt your growth?"

A comma is used to separate an interjection or weak exclamation from the rest of the sentence.

*Hey*, will you do me a favor?

*Yes*, I'd be happy to.

*Wow*, that was quite a tip!

Commas are used to set off a word, phrase, or clause that interrupts the movement of a sentence. Such expressions usually can be identified through the following tests:

- 1) They may be omitted without changing the substance or meaning of a sentence.
- 2) They may be placed nearly anywhere in the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence.

As a *general rule*, the safest way to double your money is to fold it and put it in your pocket. That is, *however*, only true for those with deep pockets.

Commas are used to separate a series of numbers in order to distinguish hundreds, thousands, millions, etc.

The Democrats wasted \$720,806 on a foolish domestic program. The Republicans invested \$1,320,252 to prove that the Democrats wasted money.

Commas are used to enclose a title or initials and names which follow a surname.

J. L. Vanderlaan, Ph.D., and G. S. Bruins, M.D., sat in their pajamas playing Old Maid.

Asche, H., Hickok, J. B., and Cody, William F., are three popular Western heroes. Casey Jones, Jr., was a good friend of John Henry, Sr.

Commas are used to separate a *vocative* from the rest of the sentence. (A vocative is the noun which names the person/s spoken to.)

Don't you realize, *George*, that you're the very first president who thinks we need independence?

*Benedict, honey*, stop giggling. Don't you know it's dangerous to let the little Franklin boy play with your kite in such awful weather?

A comma may be used for clarity or for emphasis. There will be times when none of the traditional comma rules call for a comma, but one will be needed to prevent confusion or to emphasize an important idea. Use a comma in either case.

Several days before, he had complained of headaches. (*clarity*)

What she does, does matter to us. (*clarity*)

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Those who can, tell us what happened. (*clarity*)  
"They can't yank a novelist like they can a pitcher. A novelist has to go the full nine, even if it kills him." —*Ernest Hemingway (emphasis)*

*Note:* **Do not use a comma** which could cause confusion. There should be no comma between the subject and its verb or the verb and its object. Also, use no comma before an indirect quotation.

The man who helped us unload the truck is my uncle.  
Uncle Hank said he would never again move my player piano.

### Semicolon

A semicolon is used to join two or more independent clauses which are not connected with a coordinating conjunction. (This means that each of the clauses could stand alone as separate sentences.)

I once had a '55 Chevy with a 283; that was the first V-8 I ever owned.

*Note:* The exception to this rule can occur when the two clauses are similar, short, or conversational in tone.

To rule is easy, to govern difficult.

A semicolon is used to join two independent clauses within a compound sentence — when the clauses are connected only by a conjunctive adverb. (Common conjunctive adverbs are these: *also, as a result, besides, for example, furthermore, however, in addition, in-stead, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, similarly, then, therefore, thus.*)

My neighbor proudly brags that he is free from racism; *however*, he also feels compelled to say that one of his childhood friends was black.

A semicolon is used to separate independent clauses which are long or contain commas.

Someone righteously cleansed the library of all "dirty literature"; so the library now contains only "clean" classics such as *Romeo and Juliet, Gulliver's Travels, and The Canterbury Tales.*

A semicolon is used to separate groups of words or phrases which already contain commas.

I packed a razor, toothbrush, and deodorant; blue jeans, bathing suit, and jacket; tennis balls, fish hooks, and golf clubs.

### Colon

A colon may be used after the salutation of a business letter.

Dear Ms. Asche:      Dear President Bush:

A colon is used between the parts of a number which indicate time.

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8:32 a.m.      11:03 p.m.

A colon may be used to emphasize a word, phrase, clause, or sentence which explains or adds impact to the main clause.

Television entertains America's children with the most popular theme of the day: violence. In a single evening children can witness rapes, robberies, fistfights, riots, and murders: all in the quiet confines of their living rooms.

A colon is used to introduce a list.

Debbie dropped the purse and out spilled the contents: fingernail clipper, calculator, car keys, wallet, and a ragged old nylon.

A colon should not separate a verb from its object or complement, and it should not separate a preposition from its object.

Incorrect: Hubert hated: spelling, geography, history, and reading (separates verb from objects).

Correct: Hubert hated his subjects: spelling, geography, history, and reading.

Correct: Hubert hated these: spelling, geography, history, and reading.

Incorrect: He just looked at: his fingernails, the ceiling, the teacher, and girls (separates preposition from objects).

### ***Hyphen***

The hyphen is used to make a compound word.

Great-great-grandfather, run-of-the-mill, mother-in-law, three-year-old, twenty-six-year-old songwriter, teacher-poet (coequal nouns), The Ford-Carter debates helped make peanut butter as patriotic as apple pie.

*Note:* Don't use a single hyphen when a dash (two hypens) are required.

A hyphen is used between the elements of a fraction, but not between the numerator and denominator when one or both are already hyphenated.

Four-tenths                  five-sixteenths                  (7/32) seven thirty-seconds

*Note:* use hyphens when two or more words have a common element which is omitted in all but the last term.

We have cedar posts on four-, six-, and eight-inch widths.

A hyphen is used to join a capital letter to a noun or participle.

U-turn                  A-center                  T-shirt                  V-shaped

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A hyphen is usually used to form new words beginning with the prefixes *self ex*, *all*, *great*, and *half*. It is also used to join any prefix to a proper noun, a proper adjective, or the official name of an office. A hyphen is used with the suffix *elect*.

ex-mayor, self-esteem, all-knowing, pro-American, post-Depression, mid-May,  
president-elect, governor-elect, great-grandson, half-baked

*Note:* Use a hyphen with other prefixes or suffixes to avoid confusion or awkward spelling.

**re-cover** (not *recover*) **the sofa**

**shell-like** (not *shelllike*)

The hyphen is used to join the words in compound numbers from *twenty-one* to *ninety-nine* when it is necessary to write them out.

The hyphen is used to separate a word at the end of a line of print. A word may be divided only between syllables, and the hyphen is always placed after the syllable at the end of the line — never before a syllable at the beginning of the following line.

### Additional Guidelines for Using the Hyphen

1. Always leave enough of the word at the end of the sentence so that the word can be identified.
2. Never divide a one-syllable word: *rained*, *skills*, *through*.
3. Avoid dividing a word of five letters or less: *paper*, *study*, *July*.
4. Never divide a one-letter syllable from the rest of the word: *omit-ted*, not *omitted*.
5. Always divide a compound word between its basic units: *sister-in-law*, not *sis-terin-law*.
6. Never divide abbreviations or contractions: *shouldn't*, not *should-n't*.
7. Avoid dividing the last word in a paragraph.
8. Never divide the last word in more than two lines in a row.
9. When a vowel is a syllable by itself, divide the word after the vowel: *epi-sode*, not *ep-isode*.
10. Avoid dividing a number written as a figure: *1,000,000*; not *1,000,-000*. (If a figure must be broken, divide it after one of the commas.)
11. Always check a dictionary if you are uncertain where a word should be divided.

Use the hyphen to join two or more words which serve as a single adjective (a single-thought adjective) before a noun.

slow-moving tank      mud-caked shoes      five-year-old child

"A pessimist is a person who looks both ways before crossing a one-way street."

—L.J. Peters

*Note:* When words forming the adjective come after the noun, do not hyphenate them.

**The tank ahead of us was slow moving.**      **Max's shoes are mud caked.**

When the first of the words is an adverb ending in *ly*, do not use a hyphen; also, do not use a hyphen when a number or letter is the final element in a one-thought adjective.

freshly painted barn

Grade *A* milk

number 360 sandpaper

The hyphen is used to join numbers which indicate the life span of an individual, the scores of a

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game, the term of an event, etc.

The child lived a short life: 1971-1973.

The score, 78-27, suggests the nature of the Elk Rapids-Traverse City basketball game.

### **Question Mark**

A **question mark** is used at the end of a direct question.

Are your relatives mushy when you visit them?

Are your grandparents heavy on the kissy-huggy stuff?

No question mark is used after an indirect quotation.

My aunt always asks how I am doing in school. I always wonder what "doing in school" means.

When two clauses within a sentence both ask questions, one question mark is used.

Does your uncle greet you as mine greets me — with a "cootchy-coo" under the chin and a "How old are you now, little lady?" Do you think he would feel insulted if I gave him a "cootchy-coo" in the beard and said, "I'm seventeen, Uncle, and how old are you getting to be?"

The question mark is placed within parentheses to show uncertainty.

Although my cousin is only 18 (?), he looks down his nose when he says "Hello" to his younger cousins.

A short question within parentheses is punctuated with a question mark.

You may visit me next week (is that possible?) as long as your hand-shake is firm and you don't pat my head.

Only one question mark should punctuate a question. The following punctuation is both silly and incorrect.

Do you mean that kid with the purple socks??? Really! Why did you ever date him???

### **Exclamation Point**

The **exclamation point** is used to express strong feeling. It may be placed after a word, a phrase, or a sentence. (The exclamation point should be used sparingly.)

Help! Mom! Help!

Wow, man, what a way to go!

Please! Tell me that's not a cop!

Never write more than one exclamation point; such punctuation is incorrect and looks foolish.

Isn't kissing fun!!!

Who even thinks about the germs!!!

### **Quotation Marks**

**Quotation marks** are placed before and after direct quotations. Only the exact words quoted are



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underlined.

I am "firm," you are "stubborn," he is "pigheaded."

Ray is one of those "no problem" types who somehow manage to screw up everything.

In order to be popular, she works very hard at being "cute."

Single quotation marks are used to punctuate a quotation within a quotation. Double and single quotation marks are alternated in order to distinguish a quotation within a quotation within a quotation.

"I never read 'The Raven!'"

"Did you hear him say, 'I never read "The Raven" '?"