

# Perfect Punctuation

## Capital Letters

- Beginning of any sentence
- Proper Nouns
- Proper Adjectives
- Titles of books, films or plays
- First word in Direct Speech

## Other uses:

Some abbreviations (Mr, Prof.)  
Acronyms (UNESCO)  
Continent, countries, cities, streets (John Vorster Drive)  
Rivers, mountains, oceans, deserts  
Ships (Queen Mary)  
Businesses (Ford Motor Company)  
Celestial bodies (Jupiter, Mars)  
Significant historical events (Second World War)  
Single-letter prefixes (T-shirt)

## Quotation marks “”

or “

- Direct Speech
- Repeating or quoting someone's direct words
- Used when using slang or foreign words in formal text
- Metaphoric usage

Book and film titles can be written in single quotation marks. Modern usage is to underline these titles.

My friend loves to 'photo bomb' all our photos.

He can be such a 'baby' on the rugby field.

## Question marks ?

- At the end of a question
- Rhetorical questions

## Full stop/ Period .

- End of a sentence
- After certain abbreviations

## Abbreviations

If an abbreviation ends in the last letter of the word, the full stop is omitted.

Mister - Mr

Professor - Prof.

No full stop in acronyms - USA

## Exclamation marks !

- Indicate emotions: anger, surprise, anxiety
- Follow exclamations and interjections
- Indicate a command
- Strengthen tone of sentence

## Comma ,

- Separating words in a list
- Indicates where one phrase or clause ends and another begins
- Additional information separated by a comma from the rest of the sentence
- Before and after words like “however” and “nevertheless”
- Introductory words or phrases separated from the rest of the sentence

No comma before “and” and “to”

books, pencils and pens  
Susan went back to school, to fetch her bag.

Thomas, the goalkeeper, saved the day.

They arrived, however, too late to see the game.

As always, the teacher blamed me.

## Semi-colon ;

- A long pause, balancing two parallel ideas
- Indicates antithesis (opposites)
- Joins two main clauses (no conjunction)

He waited by the door; he wants to enter the room.

Angus loves hockey; he hates swimming.

Julie looked forward to the weekend; she needed to rest

Semi-colons are often replaced by a full stop or conjunctions

## Colon :

- Indicates a list to follow
- Introduces a quotation
- In dialogue, colon introduces the speaker

# Perfect Punctuation



## Hyphen -

- Links prefixes to words
- Links two words to form compound words

anti-climax, re-do  
well-known, life-threatening

If the prefix and word both start with a vowel, a hyphen is used, e.g. pre-admission, re-enter, no-one

## Bullets

- Itemise points
- Used instead of numbers and letters
- Incomplete sentences
- Omit punctuation

Ellipsis is only used in informal language

## Ellipsis ...

- Indicates an incomplete sentence
- Reader can guess what the author means

If you fail to follow the instructions, you will see what happens...

## Parenthesis (Brackets)

- Additional information, giving an explanation

Commas or dashes can be used instead of parentheses

The All Blacks (the best rugby team in the world) will play against the Springboks.

A *tsunami* is caused by an earthquake.  
Our family enjoyed the musical *Annie*.

## Italics

**Highlight or emphasise a word or phrase**

Handwritten titles are usually in inverted commas or underlined. If typed on a computer, titles are usually in *italics* or **bold**.

## Dash —

- Separates parts of a sentence, creating a pause
- Additional information
- Separates a comment or an afterthought from the rest of the sentence
- Creates a dramatic pause or anti-climax

These children should be grateful — they have so many opportunities.  
Watch out for the dog — the one with the red collar.  
We had to wait an hour for our food — it was definitely worth it!  
He slowly opened the door and there it was — the snake!

