

Punctuation



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**OKLAHOMA
CITY**

Grammar is the system and structure of language. Proper grammar in writing ensures your thoughts and opinions are understood by the reader. **Punctuation** is one important mechanic of grammar because it provides structure to your writing and guides the reader more easily through your essay.

Commas (,) indicate a pause between parts of a sentence. Parts of a sentence include an **independent clause**, a **dependent clause**, and a **subordinating conjunction**. An independent clause contains a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. A dependent clause contains a subject and a verb, but not a complete thought; it instead adds to an independent clause's meaning. A subordinating conjunction is a word or phrase that connects an independent and dependent clause or coordinate words in one clause. Examples of common conjunctions include and, or, so, but, because, due to.

Use Commas:

1. To join two independent clauses and a coordinating conjunction.
2. After an introductory phrase, prepositional phrase, or dependent clause.
3. To separate nouns within a series or list.
4. To separate extra details from a sentence.
5. Before quotation marks.
6. Between adjectives describing the same noun.
7. After a transitional word or words.

Apostrophes indicate possession. When indicating ownership by a singular noun, put the apostrophe before the "s" (Ex: Sarah's). When indicating ownership by a plural noun, put the apostrophe after the "s" (Ex: Peoples'). If a singular noun ends with an "s," add an apostrophe "s" to it (Ex: James's).

Semicolons (;) join two independent clauses when the second clause restates the first or when the two clauses are of equal importance, join two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a **conjunctive adverb**, and join elements of a series when those individual elements include commas. A conjunctive adverb is a word or phrase that connects two independent clauses. Examples of common conjunctive adverbs include however, therefore, for example, otherwise.

Colons (:) join two independent clauses when the second clause is more important. Colons also follow an independent clause to introduce a quotation, explanation, or list of nouns.

Parentheses () enclose words, clauses, or sentences that clarify or add information within a complete clause.

Em Dashes (—) emphasize or set off extra information between them.

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Quotation Marks (“”) enclose direct quotes, titles of short poems, song titles, short stories, magazine and newspaper articles, essays, speeches, chapter titles, short films, and television episodes.

- Commas and periods are placed inside the closing quotation mark while colons and semicolons are placed outside. If the quote is a question, the question mark goes *inside* the quotation marks; if the sentence surrounding the quote is a question, the question mark goes *outside* the quotation marks. The same rule applies to exclamation points.