

# Punctuation Cheat Sheet

| Punctuation Mark        | Use to...   |
|-------------------------|---|
| ( . ) Period            | End a sentence: <i>Dinner was delicious.</i>  |
| ( ? ) Question Mark     | End a sentence and denote inquiry: <i>What time is it?</i>  |
| ( ! ) Exclamation Point | End a sentence and denote excitement or emphasis: <i>Watch out for that tree!</i>   |
| ( , ) Comma             | <p>1. Use a comma before the conjunction (and, or, but) that joins two complete sentences. <i>Note:</i> The two sentences must be independent which means they have to make sense when they stand alone. Two independent sentences combined to create a compound sentence.</p> <p>Examine the non-example. The first phrase is independent; it is a complete sentence because it makes sense. The second phrase is dependent because it is unclear unless connected to the sentence before it. A comma should not be used when the two parts are combined.</p> <p>Non-Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fire alarm rang. And announced the drill.</li> <li>• The fire alarm rang and announced the drill.</li> </ul> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fire alarm rang. It was a fire drill.</li> <li>• The fire alarm rang, but it was a fire drill.</li> </ul> <p>2. Use commas to set off words that interrupt the sentence:<br/>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fabric is pre-shrunk.</li> <li>• This fabric, on the other hand, is pre-shrunk.</li> </ul> <p>3. Use commas to separate nouns of direct address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Come in, Steve, and close the door.</li> <li>• Steve, come in and close the door.</li> <li>• Come in and close the door, Steve.</li> </ul> |

# Punctuation Cheat Sheet

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mary, listen to me.</li></ul> <p>4. Use commas to separate introductory words or phrases from the base sentence<br/>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bill sat through the horror film.</li><li>• Closing his eyes, Bill sat through the horror film.</li><li>• Yes, Bill sat through the horror film.</li></ul> <p>5. Use commas after every item in a list except the last<br/>Note: Follow this rule with nouns and verbs.<br/>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sam, Susan, Steve, and Scott went home. (nouns)</li><li>• The dog barked, jumped and rolled over. (verbs)</li></ul> <p>6. Use commas to separate two or more adjectives that describe a noun<br/>Note: Adjectives are descriptive words.<br/>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The bright, yellow sun illuminated the sky.</li></ul> <p>7. Use commas to separate a quote from the tag line<br/>Note: A quote states exactly what the speaker said. A tag line explains the quote.<br/>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "The mayor," stated Peter, "has brown hair."</li><li>• Peter stated, "The Mayor has brown hair."</li><li>• "The Mayor has brown hair," stated Peter.</li></ul> <p>8. Use commas in dates, addresses, and numbers<br/>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Friday, October 13, 1977</li><li>• 1334 Maple Road, William, New York 14221</li><li>• 12,000</li></ul> <p>9. Separate any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two or more adjectives: <i>He is a charming, attentive listener.</i></li><li>• Items in a list: <i>Please buy eggs, milk, butter and flour.</i></li><li>• The name of a city from the name of a state: <i>I live in Salt Lake City,</i></li></ul> |
|--|--|

## Punctuation Cheat Sheet

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
|                        | <p><i>Utah.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two independent clauses: <i>The waiter still hasn't taken our order, and the play starts in five minutes.</i></li> <li>Direct quotations: <i>Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."</i></li> </ul>  |
| ( ; ) Semicolon        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To merge two independent clauses that may have been separated by the words "and," "yet," "but," "or," "nor," "for" and "so."</li> <li>As a super-comma, to separate a series of items that already contain commas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There's a crocodile in the toilet; he has a lot of hair growing out of his ears.</li> <li>At the chocolate factory I scoffed acid balls, they were super sour; everlasting gob stoppers, I spat mine out after an hour; curly toffees, rather yummy; and iced fancies, they made me sick.</li> <li>For our wedding colors, I chose white, the color of innocence; red, the color of passion; and yellow, the color of lemons.</li> <li>I have lived in Detroit, Michigan; Paris, France; and Sydney, Australia.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> |
| ( : ) Colon            | <p>Introduce a list.<br/><i>For Christmas, I would like the following presents: a hula hoop, a hippopotamus, and my two front teeth.</i></p> <p>Introduce a statement that expands upon the clause before the colon.<br/><i>And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.</i></p>   |
| ( - ) Hyphen           | <p>Add a prefix: <i>Trans-Atlantic flights are costly.</i></p> <p>Create compound words: <i>Spider-Man is my favorite superhero.</i></p> <p>Write numbers as words: <i>I have lived in this house for thirty-three years.</i></p>   |
| ( – or — ) Dash        | <p>Make a brief interruption within a sentence or a parenthetical phrase: <i>Johnny asked me—with a straight face, I might add—if he could borrow the car for the weekend.</i></p>  |
| ( " ) Double Quotation | <p>Enclose a direct quotation: <i>"If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man."</i></p>  |
| ( ' ) Single Quotation | <p>Denote possession: <i>I believe that is Allen's pen.</i></p>   |

## Punctuation Cheat Sheet

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
|                              | <p>Denote contraction: <i>I know it's his because of the distinct monogram.</i></p> <p>Denote a quotation within a quotation: <i>He told me just last week, "I do enjoy this monogrammed pen. My wife said, 'Allen, it isn't like people go around mistaking your pens for theirs all day.'"</i></p>  |
| <p>(( ))<br/>Parentheses</p> | <p>Indicate clarification: <i>Please bring home some real butter (as opposed to margarine).</i></p> <p>Indicate an afterthought or personal commentary: <i>Anyone can edit Wikipedia (not that there's anything wrong with that).</i></p>   |
| <p>(')<br/>Apostrophe</p>    | <p>1. Contractions take apostrophes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's going to rain today!</li> <li>• I'm reading that book now.</li> <li>• She's happy to be leaving at four.</li> <li>• He can't finish the assignment.</li> </ul> <p>All of these sentences involve contractions. A contraction is a device showing us that some letters have been omitted, and is used in speaking and in informal writing. It is becomes it's; I am becomes I'm; she is becomes she's; cannot becomes can't.</p> <p>2. Noun possessives take apostrophes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary's car is in the repair shop.</li> <li>• My mother-in-law's letter was short.</li> <li>• We went to Clara and Tom's show. (Note that only the second name takes the apostrophe and the s.)</li> <li>• James's music is still in the hall. (Note that even though James ends in an s, the Chicago Manual of Style requires that we still add an apostrophe and an additional s. James is still a singular, and the singular follows this rule.)</li> <li>• It took five hours' walking to get there! (Note that a plural places the apostrophe after the s.)</li> </ul> <p>3. Pronoun possessives do not take apostrophes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The book should be in its place.</li> <li>• That raincoat is his.</li> <li>• Those are ours!</li> </ul> <p>4. Dates do not take apostrophes: (The exception appears to be the unfortunate style guide employed by the New York Times)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I haven't seen him since the 1990s.</li> </ul> |

## Punctuation Cheat Sheet

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He was born in the 80s.</li></ul> <p>Master these few rules and you will not (won't) make the common mistakes we all see out "in the wild," such as ....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Banana's are .49 a pound!</li><li>• Put it back in it's place!</li><li>• That book is her's!</li></ul> |
|--|---|