

GENERAL ENGLISH PUNCTUATION

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Full Stop

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Comma

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Semicolon

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Colon

:

Question Mark

?

Exclamation mark

!

Quotation Mark

“ ”

Apostrophe

‘

Hyphen

-

Dash

—

Brackets or Parentheses

()

FULL STOP

Marks the end of a declarative or imperative sentence.

Also known as period.

Denote abbreviations and initials.

e.g. My Uncle lives in Americca.

Hold the Door.

B.A., B.Com., B.Ed., A. P. Sarah

COMMA

To separate a series of words.

e.g. I had a long, dull, tiring and burdensome voyage.

To separate pair of words connected by 'and'.

e.g. Maria was kind and generous, beautiful and simple, charitable and sensitive.

After nominative absolute.

e.g. The rain having stopped, the match began.

To separate a participle phrase.

e.g. finishing his studies, he went to play.

To mark off a noun or phrase in apposition.

e.g. Wordsworth, poet of Man and nature, wrote 'Daffodils'.

To mark off a nominative of address or a vocative.

e.g. Ravi, can you solve this?

To mark off two or more adverbs or adverbial phrases.

e.g. Softly, silently, steadily, she moved about in the dark.

In a pair, before and after words, phrases, or clauses to set them off from the body of a sentence.

e.g. She could not, however, come to the party.

To indicate omission of a verb when repetition is to be avoided.

e.g. The teacher gave Rajesh a book; to his sister, a pen.

To mark off a direct quotation from the rest of the sentence.

e.g. "Exactly what I need," said Suresh.

After an introductory phrase or clause.

e.g. The thing is, I do not know him.

To separate short coordinate clauses of a compound sentence.

e.g. The rain descended, and the floods came.

SEMICOLON

To separate clauses of compound sentences, when they contain a comma.

e.g. She was a generous, loving mother; and we all adored her.

When the coordinating conjunctions and, but, or, do not appear between the main clause and coordinate clause.

e.g. She was a simple person; unfortunately she was misunderstood.

To separate a series of loosely related clauses.

e.g. Her heart was pure; her life serene.

COLON

To introduce a quotation.

e.g. Bacon says: “ Reading maketh a full man...”

Before enumerations, examples etc.

e.g. The different parts of speech are: Noun, Verb, Adverb, Preposition and
Conjunction.

QUESTION MARK

It is used instead of a full stop, at the end of a question asked.

e.g. Have you seen my watch?

Whom do you want to speak to?

EXCLAMATION MARK

Used after interjections and after phrases and sentences expressing sudden emotion or wish.

e.g. What a misfortune!

Alas! I am done.

APOSTROPHE

Used to show possession.

e.g. This is my uncle's laptop.

To show omission of letter or letters.

e.g. Don't be late.

To form the plural of letters and figures.

e.g. Dot your I's and cross your t's.

For plural nouns ending in 's'. Don't add an 's' after the apostrophe of the possessives.

e.g. Here are the girls' books.

HYPHEN

Shorter line than dash, it is used without spaces before and after to connect parts of a compound word.

e.g. home-made, rib-tickling, time-table, heart-rendering, air-conditioner, etc.

DASH

To indicate a sudden stop in the thoughts of the speaker, and the introduction of another thought.

e.g. If only I had won the elections – but why dwell on that now?

I shall make a lot of money – no need to worry about that today.

PARENTHESES

To separate from the main part of a sentence a phrase or clause which does not grammatically belong to it.

e.g. He gave us his reason (a fairy tale) for his insubordination.