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The history of Punctuation and the importance of spelling in written English.

In English writing there are two things we should be careful about in order to make our point across, so that the reader can understand us without the need of our presence to be there in order to explain what we have said. These two things are grammar and punctuation. These two words are often used interchangeably. **Punctuation** marks are the symbols we use to clarify meaning, question marks, exclamation points, periods, etc and **Grammar** is the structure of language.

The earliest time punctuation was used in English was in the 3rd century. The question mark (?) was first used in the 15th century but in the earlier days it was written as a dot with a rising tilde (. ~). The rest of the punctuation marks we know today were evolved with time in the written English with time. It took a long time for new punctuation to be discovered or required into the English writing. However, with the changes in culture and speech pattern the use of punctuation did become really important and made its way out in the writing (2).

Proper punctuation is essential in English writing as it gives the reader an understanding of the meaning of the text and the idea the author has revealed. It is a necessary tool to make writing test logical and readable. Missing or adding even something as one comma or apostrophe can greatly change the meaning of the sentence.

For example:

1) Eat you'r dinner vs eat your dinner

Eat your dinner is what we will usually say but eat you'r dinner means you are the dinner as the ' shows the missing word (are).

2) Let's eat Grandma! Vs let's eat, Grandma! (1).

In this sentence if we are not careful with the use of missing comma. The reader can misunderstand that you want to eat the grandma instead of requesting her to eat with you. This can be hilarious and embarrassing when someone reads your text. So, in simple words the correct use of punctuation can save lives.

There are 14 **punctuation** marks that are commonly used in English grammar which I will be explaining and giving examples of. They are the period, question mark, exclamation point, comma, semicolon, colon, dash, hyphen, parentheses, brackets, braces, apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipsis.

Some of the common punctuation marks and what they are used for are listed below.

1. . is a **full stop** or period – used at the end of a sentence. It indicates that a point has been made and that you are about to move on to further explanations or a related point.

2. , is a **comma** –there are four different times when a writer will use a comma in a sentence which are.

- pause before proceeding
- add a phrase that does not contain any new subject
- separate items on a list
- use more than one adjective (a describing word, like beautiful)

1. **For example:** In the following sentence the phrase between the commas gives us more information behind the actions of the boy, the subject of the sentence.

The boy, who knew that his mother was about to arrive, ran quickly towards the opening door.

If the phrase were to be removed, the sentence would still make sense although there would be a loss of information. Alternatively, two sentences could be used:

The boy ran quickly towards the opening door. He knew that his mother was about to arrive.

Commas are also used to separate items in a list.

2. **For example:**

The shopping trolley was loaded high with bottles of beer, fruit, vegetables, toilet rolls, cereals and cartons of milk.

Note that in a list, the final two items are linked by the word 'and' rather than by a comma.

Commas are used to separate adjectives.

3. **For example:**

The boy was happy, eager and full of anticipation at the start of his summer holiday.

As commas represent a pause, it is good practice to read your writing out loud and listen to where you make natural pauses as you read it. More often than not, you will indicate where a comma should be placed by a natural pause. Although, the 'rules' of where a comma needs to be placed should also be followed.

4. **For example:**

However, it has been suggested that some bees prefer tree pollen.

3. ? is a **question mark** or query – used at the end of an interrogative sentence to form a question. One version of the story dates the question mark to the 8th century, when it was described as a lightning bolt-shaped *punctus interrogative* used for similar purposes. It is a great way of letting the reader know as to whether you are giving them new information or is a question has been asked. Questions marks are only used when asking direct questions and not for indirect ones.

Example of Direct question:

- Where can I find a bargain on a good laptop?
- What did you think of the movie?

Example of Indirect question:

- The coach asked the quarterback to sit on the bench.
- The coach asked the quarterback to sit on the bench?

This will be incorrect since this is an indirect question.

We can also use question marks when writing rhetorical questions, even though no answers are expected.

For example:

- How will the World Series turn out, after all is said and done?
- Who is really to blame for the world's problems?
- Who is responsible for traffic safety? the police? the road maintenance division? drivers?

When incorporating these questions, begin each with a lower-case letter and end each one with a question mark. Because these small questions are later followed up by the main question being addressed in the writing (3).

4. **!** is an **exclamation mark** – used to denote shock, surprise, anger or a raised voice. It was originally called the note of admiration. It is gained from Latin *io*, meaning joy. When writing we can't make our voice louder or slower, so it is a great tool to show your emotions through text.

For example :

- Yes, I will marry you!
- Oh! That is a gorgeous, new dress.
- Wow! I can't believe I ran into you here.
- No! I did not intend to lock myself out of the house.
- Stop! I really don't want to get wet.....
- The cat kept saying meow! loudly and I couldn't sleep.

5. **'** is an **apostrophe** – used to show possession or ownership or when a letter is omitted.

For example:

The girl's hat was green, (girl is in the singular).

This shows the reader that the hat belongs to the girl.

6. **"** is a **quotation or speech mark**. It is used when

- To mark out speech
- When quoting someone else's speech

For example:

My grandpa said, "*Share your chocolates with your friends.*"

"*George, don't do that!*"

"*Will you get your books out please?*" said Mrs Jones, the teacher, "*and quieten down!*"

7. : is a **colon** – It is used within a sentence. It makes a very pointed pause between two phrases. There are two main uses of the colon:

- It is most commonly used when listing.

For example:

She placed the following items into the trolley: beer, fruit, vegetables, toilet rolls, cereals and cartons of milk.

- Or it can be used within a heading, or descriptive title.

For example:

Human Resource Management: Guidelines for Telephone Advisers

8. ; is a **semicolon** – used to assemble detailed listed and to replace a semicolon in between two parts of a sentence.

Example:1

We set out at dawn; the weather looked promising.

Example:2

The conference was attended by delegates from Paris, France; Paris; Texas; London; UK and Colombia.

9. ... is an **ellipsis** – used to show that there is more to be said in the sentence.

It is sometimes also demonstrated with three asterisks (***) . It is used to indicate the omission of words or letters

For example:

- So...what happened?
- Um...I'm not sure that's true.
- ...sure.
- You went to the restaurant. And...?
- But I thought we were meeting on Tuesday...?

10. – is a **hyphen** – It has many uses but is mostly used to link words together.

For example:

- sub-part
- eighteenth-century people
- second-class post
- gender-neutral
- non-verbal

11. () **brackets**- It always come in pairs () and are used to make an aside, or a point which is not part of the main flow of a sentence. If you remove the words between the brackets, the sentence should still make sense.

For example:

"The strategy (or strategies) chosen to meet the objectives may need to change as the intervention continues."

12. **Parentheses**- is a word or phrase inserted as an explanation or afterthought into a passage which is grammatically complete without it, in writing usually marked off by brackets, dashes, or commas.

Example: He finally answered (after taking five minutes to think) that he did not understand the question. If material in **parentheses** ends a sentence, the period goes after the **parentheses**. **Example:** He gave me a nice bonus (\$500) (4).

13. - Dash are used to separate groups of words, not to separate parts of words like a hyphen does. It changes the tone of the sentence.

Examples:

You are the friend, the only friend, who offered to help me.
You are the friend—the only friend—who offered to help me.
I pay the bills; she has all the fun.
I pay the bills—she has all the fun.
I wish you would ... oh, never mind.
I wish you would—oh, never mind.

14. "{}" Braces are mostly used in music or poetry. The only use for a brace in writing is when a writer presents or creates a list of equal choices for a reader or in a number set.

Examples:

- Number set: {2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12}
- Equal choices: Choose a colour {red, white, blue, pink} to paint the wall (5).

Spellings:

When writing, it is important to be able to spell right. It doesn't just make you look less intelligent than you are but can also create confusion and loss of clarity for the reader by completely changing the meaning of the sentence. For example, if you're dealing with

customer service enquiries via Twitter, that might be the one interaction customers have with that company and so the quality of that message, the use of language, is really, really important. It might be just as important as a friendly face in a store or voice over a phone. By changing one letter in a word can change its whole meaning e.g **There** and **Their**. The first word is talking about a place nearby whilst the second is talking about a thing that belongs to someone. Even though these words sound the same when speaking but have completely different meaning when we write them in a text.

Five reasons why spelling is important:

Communication: good spelling facilitates communication. By following the same rules for spelling words, we can all understand the text we read.

Comprehension: good spelling avoids confusion. In a way spelling is a bit like sports. It's up to the person passing the ball to make sure the receiver actually catches it. The same goes for spelling. If you write with intent and proper spelling, the receiver of that text will understand it.

Future: University applications and job resumes littered with spelling errors don't make it very far.

Distraction: poor spelling distracts the reader and they lose focus. It's hard to read a text for comprehension when it's full of spelling errors.

Impressions last: when you have people read something you've written and that text is full of spelling errors, it does not leave a good impression. We should care about the fundamental part good spelling plays in our language.

Examples of wrong spellings:

Misspelt word

Correct Spelling

abberration

aberration

accomodation / accomodation

accommodation

acheive

achieve

adress

address

alterior

ulterior

athiest

atheist

begginig

beginning

beleive

believe

Caucasion

Caucasian

cemetary

cemetery

committment

commitment
(but committed, committing, committee)

concensus

consensus

concieve

conceive

copywrite

copyright

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