

LESSON

12

Checking Capitalization and Spelling

LESSON SUMMARY

Capitalization and spelling are two of the most important parts of your writing. The first half of this lesson discusses which words to capitalize in a sentence, including proper nouns and adjectives. The second half offers general spelling rules and a list of commonly misspelled words. To proofread your writing expertly, it is good to have knowledge of these fundamentals.

Following are some general rules that can be applied to almost any situation in your writing.

- *First Words*

Capitalize the first word of a sentence. If the first word is a number, write it as a word.

Example

Thirty-five soldiers lined up in front of the barracks.

- *I, B.C.E., A.D.*

Capitalize the pronoun *I*, including when it is used in the contraction *I'm*. The abbreviations *B.C.E.* and *A.D.* appear as small caps.

■ *Quotation*

Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation. A direct quotation contains a person's exact words, whether they were spoken or written.

Example

Theodore Roosevelt said, "Speak softly and carry a big stick."

- Do not capitalize the first word of a quoted sentence fragment.

Example

I agree with Theodore Roosevelt when he said to "carry a big stick."

■ *Poetry*

Traditionally in poetry, the first word in each line is capitalized, although poetry is a form of writing that commonly breaks the rules of grammar. Many contemporary poets do not always use the traditional forms. Very often you will read poetry in which the first lines are not capitalized, and sometimes there are no capitalized words in the entire poem.

► **Exercise 1**

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. a. my coffee was cold, so I asked the waiter to bring me a fresh cup.
- b. My coffee was cold, so I asked the waiter to bring me a fresh cup.
- c. My coffee was cold, so i asked the waiter to bring me a fresh cup.

2. a. We studied cave paintings dated some time before 600 b.c.e.

- b. we studied cave paintings dated some time before 600 B.C.E.

- c. We studied cave paintings dated some time before 600 B.C.E.

3. a. Shirley said, "My cactus has been over-watered!"

- b. Shirley said, "my cactus has been over-watered!"

- c. shirley said, "My cactus has been over-watered!"

4. a. I have never heard of a plant being "Over-watered."

- b. i have never heard of a plant being "Over-watered."

- c. I have never heard of a plant being "over-watered."

► **Proper Nouns and Proper Adjectives**

All nouns and adjectives that name a specific person, place, or thing must be capitalized. These are called *proper nouns* and *proper adjectives*. You must know which words to capitalize in order to successfully proofread, edit, and revise your paper.

Names of People

Examples

Doug Forrest, Madonna, Martin Luther King, Jr., Liam McAndrew, Christine MacMurray, James McDonald, Bob O'Casey, Juan de la Cruz, Jean LaFitte, Ali ben-Ari

It is necessary to find out exactly how to spell and capitalize names, as the custom varies. It is important to get names right as a sign of respect and because incorrect capitalization of a name could indicate a different person.

Family Members*Examples*

Uncle Jeff, Aunt Sharon, Cousin Heidi, Grandma, Grandpa, Dad, Mom, my cousin Karl

When a possessive like *my* comes first, do not capitalize the relationship word.

Example

my dad

Brand Names of Products*Examples*

Boar's Head® ham, Band-Aid®, Kleenex®, Volkswagen® Jetta

Official Titles*Examples*

Mayor Jefferson, Governor Davis, Justice O'Connor, President Carter, Superintendent Levy, Dean Ross, Prime Minister Sulla, Secretary General Annan, Queen Elizabeth

Capitalize the title only when followed by a name. If the person is a high government official or someone to whom you wish to show respect, you may capitalize the title when it is not followed by a name.

Examples

Dr. Fitzgerald, chancellor of schools; Halle Chapman, class president; the Secretary of State; the Prince of Wales

Names of Structures and Buildings*Examples*

Empire State Building, Golden Gate Bridge, Space Needle, Veteran's Stadium

Do not capitalize the unimportant words of the name of a structure or building.

Examples

Mall of the Americas, Bridge of the Gods, Tavern on the Green

Exercise 2

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

5. a. He made a sandwich out of wonder bread® and oven-gold turkey.
b. He made a sandwich out of Wonder Bread® and Ovengold® turkey.
6. a. Uncle Fred sat next to my cousin Brenna.
b. Uncle Fred sat next to my Cousin Brenna.
7. a. Many citizens appreciated mayor Giuliani's presence at the many funerals.
b. Many citizens appreciated Mayor Giuliani's presence at the many funerals.
8. a. Her cycling trip did not cross the Bridge of the Gods.
b. Her cycling trip did not cross the bridge of the Gods.

Ethnic Groups, Races, Languages, and Nationalities*Examples*

Asian American, French, Latino, Japanese

Avoid capitalizing words modified by proper adjectives such as the ones above.

Examples

Mexican restaurant (unless the restaurant is named, such as Consuela's Mexican Restaurant), British beer, African music

Historical Events, Periods, Documents*Examples*

Revolutionary War, Middle Ages, Bronze Age, Bill of Rights

Cities, States, and Governmental Units*Examples*

Tuscaloosa, North Dakota; People's Republic of China

Capitalize the proper adjective form of cities and states, also.

Examples

Alabaman, Seattleite, Idahoan, Rhode Islander

Institutions, Organizations, and Businesses*Examples*

Evergreen State College, Wesleyan University, Girl Scouts®, First Independence Bank

Exercise 3

Circle the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 9. a.** President Lincoln wrote the gettysburg address.
b. President Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address.
- 10. a.** For my birthday, we ate Chinese food and saw a movie.
b. For my birthday, we ate chinese food and saw a movie.
- 11. a.** My brother Dean attended North Seattle Community College.
b. My brother Dean attended north seattle community college.

- 12. a.** The Indianapolis 500 is a huge event for Indianans.
b. The Indianapolis 500 is a huge event for indianans.

Days of the Week*Examples*

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday

Months*Examples*

June, November

Special Events and Calendar Events*Examples*

Fall Harvest Festival, The Great American Smoke-out, Spring Break, Groundhog's Day, Father's Day

Holidays*Examples*

Christmas, Ramadan, Yom Kippur, Kwanzaa, Chinese New Year

Exercise 4

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 13. a.** My birthday falls on a sunday.
b. My birthday falls on a Sunday.
- 14. a.** The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.
b. The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.
- 15. a.** My friend hopes to run in the boston marathon.
b. My friend hopes to run in the Boston Marathon.
- 16. a.** It was not as cold last February.
b. It was not as cold last february.

Works of Art and Literature*Examples*

Romeo and Juliet (play), *The Scarlet Letter* (book), *Mean Streets* (film), “Where the Sidewalk Ends” (poem), *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (painting)

Names of Trains, Ships, and Other Modes of Transportation*Examples*

Discovery, Mayflower, United Airlines, Starlight Express

Streets, Highways, and Roads*Examples*

Broadway, Interstate 80, Best Road, Fiftieth Avenue

Public Parks and Bodies of Water*Examples*

Deception Pass, Rio Grande, Washougal National Forest, Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, Central Park

Exercise 5

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 17. a.** Amanda sailed across the pacific ocean from Seattle to Maui.
b. Amanda sailed across the Pacific Ocean from Seattle to Maui.
- 18. a.** Jessica brought her cat home to Woodlawn Avenue.
b. Jessica brought her cat home to Woodlawn avenue.
- 19. a.** Of all of Edward Hopper’s paintings, *Nighthawks* is still my favorite.
b. Of all of Edward Hopper’s paintings, *nighthawks* is still my favorite.

- 20. a.** We rode a Trailways® bus to Mount Rushmore.
b. We rode a trailways® bus to Mount Rushmore.

► To Capitalize or Not to Capitalize**Direction Words**

Avoid capitalizing directions on the compass *unless* they name a specific area of the country.

Example

Several population centers are on the East Coast.

Example

Many African-Americans headed north to find factory work.

Seasons

Avoid capitalizing the seasons or the parts of an academic year.

Example

In the fall term, I hope to take Mr. Lackey’s class.

School Subjects

Avoid capitalizing school subjects *unless* they name a specific course. Always capitalize English because it is the name of a language.

Example

I still have the textbook from that history course.

Example

I don’t know why we have to take Biology I before we can do lab work.

Example

My English class met at 1:00 in the afternoon.

Exercise 6

Select the letter for the correctly capitalized sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 21. a.** For the series with the Giants, the Braves headed west.
b. For the series with the Giants, the Braves headed West.
- 22. a.** Kara needs to be excused from math class today.
b. Kara needs to be excused from Math class today.
- 23. a.** I plan to go to Puerto Rico in the Summer.
b. I plan to go to Puerto Rico in the summer.
- 24. a.** The Midwest had a very mild winter last year.
b. The midwest had a very mild winter last year.

► General Spelling Rules

The English language combines words from many different languages, and they do not always look the way they sound. If you know another language, such as Spanish, French, Greek, or Latin, that will help you spell in English because many English words are derived from those languages. It will also help you practice spelling correctly, just like you must practice increasing your vocabulary. When you learn a new word, concentrate not only on what it means, but how to spell it. There are also many rules to help you spell, and almost as many exceptions. Knowing the rules will help you when you write a word that you are not sure how to spell.

ie vs. ei**The Rule**

When the *ie* combination sounds like long *e* (*ee*), the rule is: *i* before *e* except after *c*.

Examples

belief fierce cashier fiend wield yield
 series chief achieve niece hygiene relieve

Exceptions

The *ie* combination comes after *c* when it sounds like *sh* or *sy*.

Examples

deficient conscience omniscient ancient
 society science

The examples above come from the Greek root *scient*, which means knowing. *Science* means knowing.

The Rule

When the combination of *e* and *i* sounds like *ay*, the rule is: *e* before *i*.

Examples

neighbor weigh eight feint freight reign
 sleigh surveillance veil vein weight skein

Exceptions

Sometimes the combination of *e* and *i* sounds like *ee*.

Examples

either weird seizure sheik leisure seize

Sometimes the combination of *e* and *i* sounds like long *i*.

Examples

height sleight stein seismology

Sometimes the combination of *e* and *i* sounds like short *e*.

Examples

their heifer foreign forfeit

Exercise 7

Select the correctly spelled word in each of the following sentences. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

25. He did not know his exact (**hieght, height**).

26. The tape player broke, so the songs sounded (**wierd, weird**).

27. The dentist told the girls about dental (**hygeine, hygiene**).

28. I did not mean to (**deceive, decieve**) you.

► Vowel Combinations

The Rule

When two vowels are together, the first one is usually long and the second one is silent.

Examples

reach cheapen conceal caffeine paisley
abstain acquaint juice nuisance buoy

Exceptions

Sometimes the pair *ai* makes an *uh* sound.

Examples

Britain porcelain fountain villain curtain
certain captain chieftain

Sometimes you pronounce both parts of the vowel pair *ia*.

Examples

civilian brilliant alleviate familiar genial
congenial menial guardian

Sometimes *ia* are combined with *t* or *c* to make a *sh* sound.

Examples

artificial glacial beneficial martial
commercial

► Silent Vowels

American English makes several vowels silent, but there is no general rule for silent vowels. For example, sometimes a silent *e* on the end of a word makes the vowel before it long, sometimes not. The best way to approach these oddly spelled words is to become familiar with them by sight.

Examples

carriage marriage every chocolate
miniature parliament privilege sophomore
boundary towel vowel bowl

Exercise 8

Select the correctly spelled word in each of the following sentences. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

29. The (**captain, captian**) sounded the alarm.

30. Pleased to make your (**acquiantance, acquaintance**).

31. Jill is a (**sophomore, sophmore**) in college.

32. The hotel bathroom had a (**porcelan, porcelain**) sink.

► Consonants

In addition to silent vowels, the English language uses silent consonants. Like silent vowels, silent consonants do not follow a general rule. The best way to learn these words is by sight, just like with silent vowels.

Examples

answer autumn calm debt ghost gnarled
gnaw indict kneel knight know
knowledge often subtle blight pseudonym
psychology rhetorical thorough through
write

► Doubling Consonants

Consonants are usually doubled when adding an ending, or *suffix*, to a word.

Rule #1

When the suffix begins with a vowel (such as *-ed*, *-ing*, *-ance*, *-ence*, or *-ant*) and the word ends with one vowel and one consonant, double the last consonant.

Examples

Cut becomes *cutter* or *cutting*.
Slip becomes *slipping* or *slipped*.
Quit becomes *quitter* or *quitting*.

Rule #2

When the final consonant of the word is accented and there is only one consonant in the last syllable, double the final consonant.

Examples

Commit becomes *committing* or *committed*.
Defer becomes *deferring* or *deferred*.
Prefer becomes *preferring* or *preferred*.

Rule #3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the final *n* when adding *-ness* and keep the final *l* when adding *-ly*.

Examples

Mean becomes *meanness*.
Lean becomes *leanness*.
Legal becomes *legally*.
Formal becomes *formally*.

► The Exceptions

There are only a few exceptions to the above rules. Below are just a few examples.

Examples

Draw becomes *drawing*.
Bus becomes *buses*.
Chagrin becomes *chagrined*.

► C and G

The letters *c* and *g* can be either soft or hard. A hard *c* sounds like *k*, a soft *c* sounds like *s*. A hard *g* sounds like the *g* in *girl*, a soft *g* sounds like *j*.

The Rule

The letters *c* and *g* are soft when followed by *e*, *i*, or *y*. Otherwise, they are hard.

Examples

SOFT SOUNDS

circus cycle cell circle cyclone central
giant gyrate genius gipsy gymnastics
gentle

HARD SOUNDS

case cousin corporate couple click crop
go gab gobble glue grimy gout

The Exceptions

When a word ends in hard *c*, add a *k* before a suffix that begins in *-e*, *-i*, or *-y*.

Examples

Traffic becomes *trafficking*

Mimic becomes *mimicking*

The Exceptions to the Exception

Very few words keep the soft *c* sound when a suffix beginning with *i* is used.

plasticity elasticity

Exercise 9

Select the correctly spelled word in each of the following sentences. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 33.** He gave me a (**suttle, subtle**) hint about my gift.
- 34.** Sharon was not guilty of (**commiting, committing**) the crime.
- 35.** When the subway suddenly stopped, some people began (**panicing, panicking**).
- 36.** The contract was (**legally, legaly**) binding.

► Final E**Rule #1**

Drop the final *e* when adding a suffix that begins with a vowel, such as *-ing*, *-able*, *-ous*, or *-ity*.

Examples

Surprise becomes *surprising*.

Leave becomes *leaving*.

Desire becomes *desirable*.

Erase becomes *erasable*.

Grieve becomes *grievous*.

Desire becomes *desirous*.

Opportune becomes *opportunity*.

Scarce becomes *scarcity*.

The Exceptions

Keep the final *e* after a soft *c* or soft *g* to keep the soft sound.

Examples

Peace becomes *peaceable*.

Advantage becomes *advantageous*.

Outrage becomes *outrageous*.

Keep the final *e* when the pronunciation of the word would be changed if you dropped the *e*.

Examples

Guarantee becomes *guaranteeing*.

Snowshoe becomes *snowshoeing*.

Rule #2

Keep the final *e* before endings that begin with consonants, such as *-ment*, *-ness*, *-less*, and *-ful*.

Examples

advertisement enforcement amusement

politeness fierceness appropriateness wireless

tireless blameless disgraceful tasteful

peaceful

The Exceptions

Drop the final *e* when it comes after the letters *u* or *w*.

Examples

argue becomes *argument*

true becomes *truly*

awe becomes *awful*

► Final Y

When adding a suffix, a final *y* is sometimes changed to an *i*.

Rule #1

When you add a suffix to a word ending in *y*, keep the *y* if it follows a vowel.

Examples

attorneys chimneys monkeys keys stayed
delayed played relayed playing relaying
staying saying annoyance conveyance
employable playable

The Exceptions

Examples

say becomes said
money becomes monies
day becomes daily

Rule #2

When you add a suffix to a word ending in *y*, change the *y* to an *i* if it follows a consonant.

Examples

Mercy becomes *merciful*.
Pity becomes *pitiful*.
Beauty becomes *beautiful*.
Busy becomes *business*.
Crazy becomes *craziness*.
Lazy becomes *laziness*.
Angry becomes *angrily*.
Busy becomes *busily*.
Healthy becomes *healthily*.
Salary becomes *salaries*.
Busy becomes *busies*.
Flurry becomes *flurries*.

The Exceptions

When you add *-ing*, keep the final *y*.

Examples

Copy becomes *copying*.
Busy becomes *busy*ing.
Study becomes *study*ing.

► -able and -ible

-able Rule #1

If a root word takes the *-ation* suffix, it usually takes *-able*.

Examples

demonstration–demonstrable
imagination–imaginable
application–applicable

-able Rule #2

If a root word is a complete word by itself, it usually takes *-able*.

Examples

drink–drinkable
read–readable
search–searchable
bear–bearable

-able Rule #3

If a word ends in hard *c* or *g*, it uses the suffix *-able*.

Examples

despicable navigable applicable

-ible Rule #1

If a word ends in soft *c* or *g*, it takes *-ible*.

Example

forcible invincible legible incorrigible

-ible Rule #2

If a word ends in *-ss*, it usually takes *-ible*.

Examples

repress–repressible
access–accessible
permiss–permissible
dismiss–dismissible

-ible Rule #3

If a root word is not a whole word, it usually takes *-ible*.

Example

responsible

-ible Rule #4

If a word takes the *-ion* suffix, it usually takes *-ible*.

Examples

collection–collectible
vision–visible
division–divisible

Exception

Predict–prediction becomes *predictable*.

► -ary and -ery**The Rule**

The rule is that only two common words end in *-ery*: *cemetery* and *stationery* (as in “paper and envelopes for letter-writing”). The rest take *-ary*.

Examples

stationary (as in “unmoving”) dictionary
military library secretary vocabulary
solitary secondary voluntary

► -al and -el**The Rule**

The rule here is that most words use *-al*. Unfortunately, there is no real rule. These words call for sight memorizing.

Examples of -al words

choral dismissal legal literal tribal
personal several neutral moral magical
lyrical festival

Examples of -el words

cancel model kennel jewel tunnel travel
shovel panel cruel towel channel hovel

► Prefixes**The Rule**

Usually, when you add a prefix to a root word, the spelling of neither the root nor the prefix changes.

Examples

misinformed unprepared disillusioned
infrequent illegitimate misspelled unnerved
dissatisfied

Exercise 10

Select the correctly spelled word in each of the following sentences. Answers are provided at the end of the lesson.

37. She became the (**Secretary, Secretary**) of State.

38. The (**desirable, desireable**) parking spot is next to the entrance.

39. The lost dog looked so (**pitiful, pityful**).

40. Laura was (responsible, responsible) for the entire project.

Summary

Whether it is capitalization or spelling, there are rules to learn and to follow. Unfortunately, there are many exceptions to the rules. As you work to improve your writing, and continue to proofread, revise, and edit, learn to recognize the words that need capitalization and memorize the correct spellings by sight.

► Answers

Exercise 1

1. b.
2. c.
3. a.
4. c.

Exercise 2

5. b.
6. a.
7. b.
8. a.

Exercise 3

9. b.
10. a.
11. a.
12. a.

Exercise 4

13. b.
14. a.
15. b.
16. a.

Exercise 5

17. b.
18. a.
19. a.
20. a.

Exercise 6

21. a.
22. a.
23. b.
24. a.

Exercise 7

25. height
26. weird
27. hygiene
28. deceive

Exercise 8

29. captain
30. acquaintance
31. sophomore
32. porcelain

Exercise 9

33. subtle
34. committing
35. panicking
36. legally

Exercise 10

37. Secretary
38. desirable
39. pitiful
40. responsible

LESSON

13

Punctuating Sentences

LESSON SUMMARY

As you fine-tune your writing, you will need to punctuate *declarative*, *imperative*, *interrogatory*, and *exclamatory* sentences with end marks such as periods, exclamation points, and question marks. The rules are provided for you in this lesson.

► Periods

Use a period at the end of a *declarative* sentence (a sentence that makes a statement).

Example

The coffee shop closes soon.

Example

If the weather warms up, I will mow the lawn.

Use a period at the end of an *imperative* sentence (a sentence that makes a request, gives an instruction, or states a command).

Example

Drop your time sheet in the manager's box.

Example

It is best to turn off the power strip before unplugging the computer.

Example

Make a left turn at the light.

Use a period at the end of a sentence that asks an indirect question.

Examples

Have you read the Harry Potter books? (*direct question*)

My friend asked me if I had read the Harry Potter books. (*indirect question*)

Examples

Did you turn in the earnings report? (*direct question*)

Our boss wanted to know if we had turned in our earnings report. (*indirect question*)

Examples

Will you help me change the tire? (*direct question*)

The man asked me to help him change the tire. (*indirect question*)

Use a period after an initial.

Example

The girl's favorite character is Junie B. Jones.

Example

E.M. Forster wrote for many years.

Example

Ned A. Garnett goes by his middle name Archibald, or Archie.

Use a period after an abbreviation, including titles such as Mr., Mrs., and Dr.

Example

The note said to call Dr. Nayel Mon. or Wed. in the evening.

Note that if the abbreviation comes at the end of the sentence, you should use only one period.

Use a period after abbreviations.

Example

This year Thanksgiving falls on Nov. 28.

Example

I take the train to the Ditmars Blvd. stop.

Example

I will return to my 6 ft. by 10 ft. dorm room in Jan.

Example

Mrs. Feretovic told Oscar to be ready at 6 P.M.

Note that if the abbreviation is followed by a comma, you should use both a period and a comma.

Example

My first exam is on Thurs., and my second is the following week.

Example

My alarm clock was set for 6 P.M., so I did not wake up in time.

Exception #1

Some abbreviations have become acronyms. Acronyms are either abbreviations that are pronounced as a word, like AIDS, or widely recognized names, like FBI or NASA. They do not receive periods.

Example

Agents at the Detroit office of the CIA traced the purchase back to Canada.

Example

On Saturday, I am going to watch NASCAR with my friends.

Example

Seven Baltic states were just admitted into NATO.

In formal writing, it is best to avoid using abbreviations when possible, because they are considered informal shorthand. Titles, such as Mr., Mrs., Dr., Jr., etc., are acceptable in formal writing, as are very common abbreviations, like “P.M.” Months, days of the week, and any shorthand like “b/c” for “because” should be spelled out.

The first time an acronym is used in a piece of writing, it is wise to write the name in full followed by the acronym in parentheses.

Example

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has been working toward increased civil rights for decades.

Exception #2

If an abbreviation has become a commonly used name, no period is needed.

Example

We had to go to the *auto* shop. (abbreviation for *automobile*)

Example

On the way to the *dorm*, I had to stop for *gas*. (abbreviations for *dormitory* and *gasoline*)

Example

At the *gym*, they offered free vision *exams*. (abbreviations for *gymnasium* and *examinations*)

Use a period (also known as a decimal point) before a decimal.

Example

George’s grade point average was a 3.2.

Example

To simplify, we will round pi off to 3.14 when solving the next series of problems.

Use a period between dollars and cents.

Example

The portrait will cost \$37.50 for the basic package.

Example

There is talk of raising the bus fare from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per ride.

Use a period in place of the dot when writing about the Internet. In other words, when people talk about the Internet, they say “dot,” as in “dot-com.” When writing about the Internet, the “dot” is a period and is not typically written as a word.

Example

We searched for information on Riddle.com.

Example

The non-profit group has a new website at Free-Billy.org that is really great.

Note that a period is not used after the Internet abbreviations that are part of the Internet address, such as .com, .org, or .net.

Exercise 1

Select the letter of the correctly written sentence. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. a. Dr Theodore Langley specializes in dermatology
- b. Dr. Theodore Langley specializes in dermatology.
- c. Dr. Theodore Langley specializes in dermatology

- 2. a. My appointment is Tues at 6:15 PM.
- b. My appointment is Tues. at 6:15 PM.
- c. My appointment is Tues. at 6:15 P.M.

Example

Why is everybody looking out the window?

Example

Who is that masked man?

- 3. a. My neighbor, Mrs Dougherty, had to get an M.R.I.
- b. My neighbor, Mrs. Dougherty, had to get an M.R.I..
- c. My neighbor, Mrs. Dougherty, had to get an M.R.I.

In dialogue, *where* and *when* can also begin answers to questions. These answers are statements and are punctuated with a period.

Example

“Do you know *where* my book is?”

“*Where* you left it, probably.”

- 4. a. Mr. E. wanted to know if he could have his job back.
- b. Mr E. wanted to know if he could have his job back?
- c. Mr. E wanted to know if he could have his job back.

Example

“When will you finish the proposal for the project?”

“*When* I get the time.”

- 5. a. Jeanine’s dorm. room is 60 sq ft.
- b. Jeanine’s dorm room is 60 sq. ft.
- c. Jeanine’s dorm. room is 60 sq. ft.

To make a statement into a question, place the subject of the sentence between the verbs of the verb phrase. In the examples below, the verb phrase is underlined.

Example

He could have played today. (*statement*)

Could he have played today? (*question*)

► Question Marks

Use a question mark after an *interrogatory* sentence (a word or group of words that asks a direct question).

Example

Who?

Example

Howard is going to the movie. (*statement*)

Is Howard going to the movie?

Example

All right?

The verb phrase is not always separated by the subject in *interrogatory* sentences. In fact, questions can be *declarative* sentences with a question mark at the end. When read aloud, the speaker raises his or her voice at the end of the sentence to make it clear to the listener that it is a question.

Example

Has anybody seen my keys?

Example

The lunch break has ended?

Remember, indirect questions are punctuated with a period as discussed above.

Sentences that begin with the 5 W’s and 1 H of journalism: *Who, what, where, when, why* and *how* are usually questions.

Example

It is time to go shopping?

► **Exclamation Points**

Use an exclamation point after an *exclamatory* sentence (a sentence that expresses strong feeling).

Example

I can't believe we made it!

Example

Watch out for that bus!

Use an exclamation point after an *interjection* (a word or group of words used to express surprise or other emotion).

Example

Wow!

Example

Congratulations!

Example

For Heaven's sakes!

An interjection has no grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence. It is not a necessary part of speech, like a noun or verb.

When writing, it is best to use exclamation points only when necessary because when they are used too frequently, they lose their impact. Reading a paragraph with several exclamatory sentences is like sitting next to someone who yells in your ear. It can become annoying very quickly.

Exercise 2

Correctly punctuate and rewrite each of the following sentences on the lines provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

6. When do you think you will arrive

7. Hooray The new phone books are here

8. I fly from Wash, DC to San Diego, CA.

9. Help The sink is overflowing

10. Mr Owen heard the lecture by Howard T Sloan

11. On Wed I have tickets to the NASCAR event

12. My sister asked if I had seen her notebook

13. Cool shoes Where did you get them

14. Will you check my homework for me

Summary

Different kinds of sentences use different end punctuation. The most common is the period. An exclamation point adds energy, but be careful to use it selectively, so your sentences do not all have the same high energy. Question marks follow interrogatory sentences; just remember to form the sentence properly.

► Answers**Exercise 1**

1. b.
2. c.
3. c.
4. a.
5. b.

Exercise 2

6. When do you think you will arrive?
7. Hooray! The new phone books are here!
8. I fly from Wash., DC to San Diego, CA.
9. Help! The sink is overflowing!
10. Mr. Owen heard the lecture by Howard T. Sloan.
11. On Wed. I have tickets to the NASCAR event.
12. My sister asked if I had seen her notebook.
13. Cool shoes! Where did you get them?
14. Will you check my homework for me?

LESSON

14



Using Commas

LESSON SUMMARY

When you proofread your draft, it is important to mark the places where commas separate words, thoughts, phrases, clauses, dates, addresses, or items in a series.

W

hen your readers see a comma, it indicates that they should pause before continuing to read. Commas can be overused, so it is essential to know where to place them.

► Introductory Words

A comma separates an introductory word from the rest of the sentence.

Example

Sadly, the summer ended.

Example

Surprised, my father spoke with a shaky voice.

Words such as *yes*, *no*, *well*, *why*, and *oh* are also followed by a comma when they begin a sentence. This usage is typical of the way we speak and of written dialogue. However, writers do not often use it in academic or business writing.

Example

No, I can't go to the movie.

Example

Well, I want to see the show.

► Introductory Clauses

Another form that is set off by a comma is the clause. Introductory clauses are always *dependent* clauses because they are not a complete sentence without the rest of the sentence.

Example

When I fell down, I twisted my ankle.

Example

Although the beach was far away, we arrived before dark.

Example

Walking to school, I stepped in a puddle.

Example

Looking at his face in the mirror, Jim saw a wrinkle.

Example

Happily surrounded by friends, Henry left the restaurant.

Note that if the two sentence parts were reversed, you no longer use a comma.

Example

I twisted my ankle when I fell down.

Example

We arrived before dark although the beach was far away.

Exercise 1

Rewrite the following sentences and add commas in the correct places. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. No I did not know that.

2. Hoping for the best we drove further from the highway.

3. When we visited St. Louis we saw the famous arch.

4. Shocked she brought her hand up to her mouth.

5. I rewound the tape, before we returned it to the store.

► Commas with Appositives

Appositives are also set off by commas. An appositive is a noun or a pronoun that follows another noun or pronoun to identify or explain it. An *appositive phrase* is a phrase that contains an appositive.

Example

Frances, the best photographer in the state, took pictures at my wedding.

The appositive phrase *the best photographer in the state* identifies *Frances*.

Example

Ms. Vargas, the school guidance counselor, changed all my classes.

The appositive phrase *the school guidance counselor* identifies *Ms. Vargas*.

If the appositive phrase comes at the end of the sentence, there is only a comma at the beginning of the phrase.

Example

The opening act was David Grubman, a comic from Duluth.

Sometimes appositives are accidentally treated as complete sentences, but they are actually sentence fragments when left by themselves. Appositives have no verb or subject and do not express a complete thought.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following sentences and add commas in the correct places. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

6. My aunt a gourmet cook prepared Thanksgiving dinner.

7. I took photographs of Adam Debbie's baby.

8. Mr. Melvin the bus driver always tells me the news.

9. Pretend you are King Arthur the leader of the round table.

10. Hasim goes bowling every Saturday an event he looks forward to all week.

► **Nonessential Clauses**

Clauses that are not introductory are set off by commas if they are *nonessential* clauses. A nonessential clause adds information to a sentence, but is not essential to the basic meaning of the sentence. If a nonessential clause is removed, the meaning of the sentence is not changed.

Example

Bobby's house, which is next door to mine, has a game room.

If you remove the nonessential clause *which is next door to mine*, the meaning of the sentence stays the same. The sentence is not about where Bobby's house is, but what it has in it.

Bobby's house has a game room.

Nonessential clauses usually begin with a *subordinating conjunction* such as *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, or *that*.

If, by removing the clause, you change the meaning of the sentence, then it is an *essential* clause and is not set off by commas.

Example

All students who are failing two or more classes should be given after-school tutoring.

Remove the clause *who are failing two or more classes* and the meaning of the sentence changes.

All students should be given after-school tutoring.

This indicates that it is an essential clause and is not set off by commas.

Exercise 3

Examine the following sentences very carefully. Look for the subordinating conjunction to find the clause. If it is a nonessential clause, rewrite the sentence with commas. If it is an essential clause, write *essential* on the line. Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

- 11.** Randy who is one of the most talkative people I have ever met has become my friend.

- 12.** The adults who received the shot should not get the flu this winter.

- 13.** All the kittens that have had their shots are ready to be adopted.

- 14.** The letter which is strictly confidential was addressed to me.

► **Independent Clauses**

An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence. Two independent clauses are sometimes joined by a conjunction such as *and, but, or, for, nor, so, and yet*. When two clauses are combined like this, a comma follows the first clause.

Example

I needed to buy some food, and so I went to the grocery store.

Example

Steve served well, but the volleyball team lost anyway.

Example

I locked my keys in the car, and my spare key was in my desk at home.

Exercise 4

Rewrite the following sentences and add the correct punctuation on the line provided. If the sentence is correct as it appears, write *correct* on the line. Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

- 15.** The computer was covered each night yet it still got dusty.

- 16.** The winter storm brought eight inches of snow so all schools in the area opened late.

17. The glasses fell off the shelf and broke.

18. The Yucatan Peninsula is beautiful but it is being developed very quickly.

► **Items in a Series**

Commas separate items in a series to make it easier for the reader to understand. These separated items can be words, phrases, or clauses. Usually, a conjunction comes before the last item in the series. A comma is optional before the conjunction, but when you decide to use a comma in this case, you should be consistent.

Words

Example

Michelle, Jordan, Andy, and Margo went to the dance together.

Example

I made sure I had a clean shirt, shoes, jacket, and tie.

In both of the above examples, a comma separates *nouns* in a list. *Verbs* can also come in a list and be separated by commas.

Example

The lawnmower rumbled, backfired, and died.

Phrases

Example

The skateboarder spun, hopped onto the railing, slid down, and landed gracefully at the bottom of the stairs.

Example

The aliens landed their spacecraft, opened the pod doors, and stepped out into the sunlight.

Clauses

Example

Dave packed the snow gear, Melissa cleared out the trunk of the car, and Felipe made some sandwiches to eat on the trip to the mountain.

Example

The office was closed for the night, my manager was out of town, and the report had to be sent to the main office tomorrow.

Exercise 5

Rewrite the following sentences and add the correct punctuation. If the sentence is correct as it appears, write *correct* on the line. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

19. The water damage caused the plaster to stain crack and fall apart.

20. The reservations only included me Phil and Charles.

21. The basketball court was cracked concrete the rims were bent and the backboards were covered in graffiti.

22. Howard and Roberta own the jewelry store.

Dates and Addresses

Put a commas between the date and the year when writing the date in a *month-day-year* format.

Example

Walt married Jen on February 6, 1994, and then started his job with Kemper.

Example

Holly was born on April 17, 1987.

If using a *month-year* format for the date, no comma is needed. Notice that the preposition *on* becomes *in* when the date is written this way.

Example

Holly was born in April 1987.

Put commas on either side of the state or province when it is used to further identify a city.

Example

Only about 1,000 people lived in Boston, Massachusetts, in the 1640s.

Example

The Liberty Bell is in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Example

My favorite wax museum is in Victoria, British Columbia.

Commas separate the items in a street address.

Example

My friends found a house to rent at 1625 Pine Street N.W., Anchorage, Alaska.

Example

The job interview will take place at 3 Halsey Tower, Suite 104.

Exercise 6

Rewrite the following sentences and add commas where necessary. If the sentence is correct as it appears, write *correct*. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

23. The SAT exam will be administered on January 18 2004 in the school auditorium.

24. I sent the package to 7335 50th Street N.E. Seattle Washington 98115.

25. The air show was in March 1999 in Santa Clara.

26. Blake left for Minneapolis Minnesota yesterday.

27. The United Nations is headquartered in New York City.

28. The festival is in Las Vegas New Mexico in May 2004.
-
-

► Adjectives

Commas separate two or more adjectives preceding a noun.

Example

It was a cold, snowy day.

Example

I slept in a big, tall, comfortable feather bed.

Commas do not follow all the adjectives in a series. Commas are not used to separate adjectives that are thought of as part of the noun, such as *feather bed* in the example above.

To determine if a comma is necessary, place *and* between the adjectives. If the sentence still reads well, use a comma. If it is awkward or unclear, do not use a comma.

Example

The salesperson was a friendly, talkative, well-dressed man.

The salesperson was a friendly *and* talkative *and* well-dressed man.

Example

My ideal vacation destination is a warm, deserted, sandy beach with my sweetheart.

My ideal vacation destination is a warm *and* deserted *and* sandy beach with my sweetheart.

When revising sentences, changing the order of adjectives in a sentence can change whether a

comma is needed. Be sure to use the test above each time you proofread.

► Parenthetical Expressions

Parenthetical comes from the word *parentheses*, those handy punctuation marks that separate statements used to explain or qualify a statement. In place of parentheses, you can use commas to set off such parenthetical expressions as *in fact*, *I believe*, *on the other hand*, *indeed*, *as a matter of fact*, *moreover*, *however*, and *consequently*.

Example

My bicycle, on the other hand, never uses gas.

Example

The petroleum-producing countries, consequently, began refining more oil.

► Contrasting Elements

When a sentence contains two ideas that contrast, separating the ideas with a comma makes it easier for the reader to understand. A conjunction such as *but* or *then* is often used, but not always.

Example

The bus arrived on time, but we were still late.

Example

The soap box derby cars ran quickly at the beginning of the race, slowly at the end.

Example

We saw the house where Diego Rivera was born, not his studio.

► **Direct Address**

Whenever the name of a person being addressed is included in a sentence, it should be set apart by commas.

Example

Do you know, Kathy, where the canned tomatoes are?

Example

Sarah, please take care of the plants while I am gone.

Occasionally, the person being addressed is not named, but identified in another way.

Example

I promise you, my friend, the tour is well worth the wait.

► **Exclamations**

Mild exclamations are also set apart by commas.

Example

Gee, the radio was turned off when we left.

Example

Man, that movie was way too long.

Exercise 7

Rewrite the following sentences and add commas where necessary. If the sentence is correct as it appears, write *correct*. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

29. By the end however the crowd was on their feet.

30. Gosh the hill looks steeper now that I am standing at the top.

31. You cover their point guard Norm and Hal you post up in the key.

32. We expected to play for an hour not ten minutes.

► **Friendly Letter**

Commas follow the greeting of a friendly letter.

Example

Dear Mom,

Example

Dear Jonas,

Commas also follow the closing of a friendly letter.

Example

Sincerely,

Example

Always yours,

Summary

Commas separate items and sentence elements, but they can be overused. When a reader sees a comma, he or she knows it signifies a brief pause. Revising sentences that have too many commas prevents your writing from having unnecessary pauses.

► **Answers**

Exercise 1

1. No, I did not know that.
2. Hoping for the best, we drove further from the highway.
3. When we visited St. Louis, we saw the famous arch.
4. Shocked, she brought her hand up to her mouth.
5. I rewound the tape before we returned it to the store.

Exercise 2

6. My aunt, a gourmet cook, prepared Thanksgiving dinner.
7. I took photographs of Adam, Debbie's baby.
8. Mr. Melvin, the bus driver, always tells me the news.
9. Pretend you are King Arthur, the leader of the round table.
10. Hasim goes bowling every Saturday, an event he looks forward to all week.

Exercise 3

11. Randy, who is one of the most talkative people I have ever met, has become my friend.
12. essential
13. essential
14. The letter, which is strictly confidential, was addressed to me.

Exercise 4

15. The computer was covered each night, yet it still got dusty.
16. The winter storm brought eight inches of snow, so all schools in the area opened late.
17. correct
18. The Yucatan Peninsula is beautiful, but it is being developed very quickly.

Exercise 5

The parentheses indicate the optional comma.

- 19.** The water damage caused the plaster to stain, crack(,) and fall apart.
- 20.** The reservations only included me, Phil(,) and Charles.
- 21.** The basketball court was cracked concrete, the rims were bent(,) and the backboards were covered in graffiti.
- 22.** correct

Exercise 6

- 23.** The SAT test will be administered on January 18, 2004 in the school auditorium.
- 24.** I sent the package to 7335 50th Street N.E., Seattle, Washington, 98115.
- 25.** correct
- 26.** Blake left for Minneapolis, Minnesota yesterday.
- 27.** correct
- 28.** The festival is in Las Vegas, New Mexico in May 2004.

Exercise 7

- 29.** By the end, however, the crowd was on their feet.
- 30.** Gosh, the hill looks steeper now that I am standing at the top.
- 31.** You cover their point guard, Norm, and Hal, you post up in the key.
- 32.** We expected to play for an hour, not ten minutes.

LESSON

15

Using Semicolons and Colons

LESSON SUMMARY

Proper usage of the semicolon and colon demonstrates a thorough understanding of grammar concepts such as independent clauses and conjunctions as well as general punctuation.

Mastering the uses of a semicolon and colon will help you to edit with confidence.

► Semicolons between Clauses

To refresh your memory, an independent clause has a subject and a verb and can stand alone as a complete sentence. When two independent clauses about a related thought are combined into one sentence, it is a compound sentence. When a compound sentence does not contain a conjunction, such as *and* or *but*, a semicolon can be used.

Example

Gregory always donates to Toys for Tots; he feels it is important to help disadvantaged children have a happy holiday.

Example

Open the box from the top; do not use a box knife.

Example

Set down your pencils; close your test booklets.

The thoughts in the above examples are closely related, so using a semicolon makes good sense. Inserting a period after the first independent clause would cause too much of a break between ideas. When revising your writing, look for places where the conjunction can be replaced by a semicolon. Keep in mind, however, that it is ultimately a style decision and not a grammatical necessity.

► **Semicolons and Conjunctive Adverbs**

Semicolons separate independent clauses when they are joined by conjunctive adverbs.

Example

The union and management could not come to an agreement before the deadline; however, they were willing to meet again in the morning.

Example

The water level in the lower altitudes rose to unprecedented heights over the long weekend; furthermore, the base snow level rose above the tree line.

Following is a complete list of words used as conjunctive adverbs.

accordingly	furthermore	instead
otherwise	besides	hence
moreover	therefore	consequently
however	nevertheless	thus

Do not confuse conjunctive adverbs with subordinating conjunctions such as *because*, *though*, *until*, and *while*. A clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction is a subordinate clause, not an independent clause; it cannot stand alone as a sentence.

One way to determine whether a word is a conjunctive adverb is to see if it can be placed differently within a sentence. Here are two independent clauses:

The lightning storm began in the late morning.
The golf game was cancelled.

There are two ways of combining these two independent clauses into one compound sentence:

The lightning storm began in the late morning; therefore, the golf game was cancelled.

The golf game was cancelled because the lightning storm began in the late morning.

The second clause in the first sentence could read, “the golf game, *therefore*, was cancelled.” Since it could be placed differently, you know *therefore* is a conjunctive adverb.

In the second sentence above, try to move the conjunction *because* to a different place in the sentence. It doesn’t make sense to say, “The lightning storm *because* began in the late morning” or, “The lightning storm began *because* in the late morning.” In this case, *because* is clearly a subordinating conjunction, and the clause it introduces, “because the lightning storm began in the late morning,” is not an independent clause.

► **Semicolons and Phrases**

In addition to conjunctive adverbs, semicolons can be used with phrases such as *for example*, *for instance*, and *that is*.

Example

State universities have some advantages over smaller, private colleges; for example, the variety of programs offered is typically greater at a larger school.

Example

The two coaches saw no way of resolving the issue; that is, each claimed the other was unwilling to negotiate a time and place for the make up game.

► **Semicolons between Word Groups with Commas**

If a sentence uses too many commas, the reader can become confused. Use a semicolon instead of a comma before a conjunction for the reader's clarification.

Example

Jerry will not even try Greek, Japanese, or Thai food; but he will eat anything that his mother cooks.

Example

The new bowling alley has 20 lanes, 12 video games, four pinball machines, a restaurant, and a full bar with karaoke; and the grand opening exceeded the expectations of the owners.

Use a semicolon between a series of phrases if they contain commas.

Example

The orientation for new employees will be held on Friday, October 11; Saturday, October 12; and Wednesday, October 16.

Example

The three brothers who won the lottery live in Tacoma, Washington; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Athens, Georgia.

Exercise 1

Rewrite the following sentences adding semicolons where they are needed. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. I made it to the meeting on time however, I will drive a different route next time.

2. Our trip took us to New Orleans, Louisiana, Lubbock, Texas, and Nashville, Tennessee.

3. When taking a standardized test, read all the possible answers, do not just select the first answer that seems correct.

4. Gordon forgot to lock the storage closet consequently, he worried that someone might use the inventory.

5. I forgot to pack a sleeping bag, Jan, her raincoat, and Barry, his gloves.

6. Adam finally fixed the windows they were letting in the rain.

► Colons that Introduce

The colon is used at the end of an independent clause to introduce a list of items. The list that follows is usually an explanation of what was stated before the colon.

Example

She wanted to buy one of these cars: a Honda Accord, a Toyota Celica, or a Volkswagen Jetta.

Example

These people were selected for the business trip to Las Vegas: Joe McGarretty, Linda Anderson, and Bruce Swensen.

Do not use a colon to introduce items that complete the sentence. In other words, if the clause before the list cannot stand as a complete sentence by itself, do not use a colon.

Example

She wanted to buy a Honda Accord, a Toyota Celica, or a Volkswagen Jetta.

The clause *she wanted to buy* is not a complete thought. The list of cars answers the question *she wanted to buy what?* and therefore completes the sentence.

Example

The people selected for the business trip to Las Vegas were Joe McGarretty, Linda Anderson, and Bruce Swensen.

Colons are used to introduce a formal statement or extract.

Example

As President Theodore Roosevelt often advised: “Speak softly and carry a big stick.”

Example

Leo Tolstoy, the famous author, once said: “What a strange illusion it is to suppose that beauty is goodness.”

Colons are used to introduce a formal statement. Often, expressions such as *the following* or *as follows* precede the colon and no quotation marks are necessary.

Example

Mara Reilly, Chief Financial Officer, made the following observations: Communication between the many departments is vital for improving efficiency and increasing profits.

Example

When operating the One Ton Press, observe the safety procedures as follows: place the item to be pressed in the center of the plate, drop the safety guard and firmly latch it closed, and push and hold the safety button while turning the hydraulic wheel.

► Colons that Show a Subordinate Relationship

Use a colon to show a subordinate relationship in the following situations:

- Between two sentences when the second explains the first.

Example

Bobby hurriedly turned in the paper: He was already forty minutes late.

Example

Hilary was disappointed with her performance: She felt she could have done better.

- Between the title and the subtitle of a book.

Example

Yesterday: A History of The Beatles

Example

Genetically Modified Foods: The Cure for Hunger or a Recipe for Disaster?

- Between hour and minute.

Example

11:47 A.M.

Example

5:15 P.M.

- Between volume and page number or between chapter and verse.

Example

World Book Encyclopedia IV: 113

Example

Genesis 1:2

- After the greeting of a business letter.

Example

Dear Ms. Wallace:

Example

Vincent Mayberry, Director of Human Resources:

Note that in business letters, the closing is followed by a comma rather than a colon.

► **Exercise 2**

Rewrite the following sentences adding colons where they are needed. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

- 7.** The train leaves the station at 349 P.M.

- 8.** The entire hockey team skated out onto the ice Their star forward had been hit in the face with a high stick.

- 9.** These employees may take their lunch at 1100 A.M. Rick Ouimet, Mercy Tullis, and Lorraine Johnson.

- 10.** The first line of the Gettysburg Address reads as follows Four score and seven years ago.

Summary

Correctly using colons and semicolons in your writing shows that you have a good understanding of clauses, phrases, conjunctions, and sentence structure. When used with accuracy, they make your writing more concise and clear.

► Answers

Exercise 1

1. I made it on time to the meeting; however, I will drive a different route next time.
2. Our trip took us to New Orleans, Louisiana; Lubbock, Texas; and Nashville, Tennessee.
3. When taking a standardized test, read all the possible answers; do not just select the first answer that seems correct.
4. Gordon forgot to lock the storage closet; consequently, he worried that someone might use the inventory.
5. I forgot to pack a sleeping bag; Jan, her raincoat; and Barry, his gloves.
6. Adam finally fixed the windows; they were letting in the rain.

Exercise 2

7. The train leaves the station at 3:49 P.M.
8. The entire hockey team skated out onto the ice: Their star forward had been hit in the face with a high stick.
9. These employees may take their lunch at 11:00 A.M.: Rick Ouimet, Mercy Tullis, and Lorraine Johnson.
10. The first line of the Gettysburg Address reads as follows: “Four score and seven years ago. . . .”

LESSON

16



Using Apostrophes in Plurals and Possessives

LESSON SUMMARY

Apostrophes serve one main purpose in the English language. They show possession. They also replace letters in contractions and form the plural of some nouns. This lesson will teach you to use apostrophes correctly when revising your writing.

Apostrophes are used to show that one or more things belong to one or more people or things. That is called *possession*. To form the possessive case of a singular noun, add an apostrophe and an *s*.

Example

Shakema's folder

Example

Ross's car

In words of two syllables or more that end in *s*, you *may* form the possessive by adding the apostrophe without the *s*.

Example

the Torres' party

Example
the actress' costume

There is no rule that applies to all writers in all situations with singular nouns ending in *s*. If you are writing for a particular class or company, you should check to see which style guide is used. This will determine which rule to follow. Typically, the pronunciation of the word determines whether it has an apostrophe followed by an *s* or an apostrophe before an *s*. In other words, if you pronounce it *Williamsses* then punctuate it *Williams's*. If you pronounce it *Williams* as in *the Williams' garden*, then punctuate it *Williams'*.

When forming the possessive of a plural noun that ends in *s*, add only an apostrophe.

Example
the boys' basketball team

Example
the kids' various toys

Personal pronouns such as *his*, *hers*, *its*, *ours*, *yours*, and *theirs* do not require an apostrophe.

Correct Example
I believe the sandwich is *hers*.

Incorrect Example
I believe the sandwich is *her's*.

Correct Example
That game was basketball at *its* most athletic.

Incorrect Example
That game was basketball at *it's* most athletic.

Remember that these possessive personal pronouns are *not* contractions as in the incorrect example above.

Indefinite pronouns in the possessive case require an apostrophe and an *s*. Below is a list of indefinite pronouns:

another	anybody	anyone
either	everybody	everyone
neither	nobody	no one
one	other	somebody
someone		

Example
Never take another's place in line.

Example
That is somebody's hat.

Exercise 1

On the lines provided, rewrite the italicized words using the correct possessive case. If it appears in the correct form, write *correct*. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. The parking attendant misplaced *everyones'* keys.

2. Those are the *childrens'* books.

3. The team would not refund *it's* season ticket holders.

4. The entire restaurant is *ours*.

5. All of the *poets*' work was destroyed in the fire and she was devastated.

6. Mr. *Davis* social studies class went on a trip to the museum.

7. I left the report on my *boss*' desk.

8. It is *everyone*'s dream to be successful.

► Apostrophes in Contractions

A contraction is one word made by combining two words and replacing one or more letters with an apostrophe.

Example

The contraction for *do not* is *don't*.

Note the apostrophe replaces the *o* in *not*.

Example

For *they are* the contraction is *they're*.

Note the apostrophe replaces the *a* in *are*.

Here is a list of common contractions:

let's can't shouldn't couldn't wouldn't
he'll she'll we'll they'll it'll it's what's
he's she's we're they're we've they've
should've could've would've won't

Note that the contraction *won't* combines *will* and *not*. Otherwise, when proofreading, make sure that the apostrophe is placed where the letter or letters it is replacing would have been written.

Also note that the contraction *it's* can easily be confused with the possessive *its* which has no apostrophe. One strategy for avoiding errors is to avoid contractions entirely. They are informal and can pose punctuation problems.

► Apostrophes to Form Plurals

When forming the plural of symbols, letters, or numbers, use an apostrophe and an *s*.

Example

When playing "tic tac toe," one player uses *x's* and the other uses *o's*.

Example

The word "unnecessary" has two *n's*.

Example

The uniform company accidentally sent two number *7's* for the same team.

When referring to words in your writing, use an apostrophe and an *s*.

Example

Run-on sentences often occur because of the overuse of *and's*.

Example

You need to clean your room with no *if's*, *and's*, or *but's*.

Exercise 2

Write the following sentences on the line provided, inserting apostrophes where they belong to make correct contractions and possessive forms. If the sentence is correct as it appears, write *correct* on the line. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

9. You shouldve gone to the party.

10. Womens sports have become more popular.

11. Do you know whats going on?

12. Have you read the books on the reading list?

13. Whos in charge of Rubens report?

14. My cousins hat fell off at the beach.

15. They can take care of themselves.

16. She uses lots of *verys* in her writing.

Summary

Apostrophes play an important role in making your writing clear, but they can be a source of punctuation errors. To limit apostrophe mistakes, it is important to learn the possessive forms and avoid using contractions.

► **Answers**

Exercise 1

1. The parking attendant misplaced *everyone's* keys.
2. Those are the *children's* books.
3. The team would not refund *its* season ticket holders.
4. correct
5. All of the *poet's* work was destroyed in the fire and she was devastated.
6. Mr. *Davis'* social studies class went on a trip to the museum.
7. I left the report on my *boss's* desk.
8. correct

Exercise 2

9. You should've gone to the party.
10. Women's sports have become more popular.
11. Do you know what's going on?
12. correct
13. Who's in charge of Ruben's report?
14. My cousin's hat fell off at the beach.
15. correct
16. She uses lots of *very's* in her writing.

LESSON

17



Using Quotation Marks

LESSON SUMMARY

Quotation marks are used when quoting someone's exact words, when writing dialogue, when punctuating the titles of magazines and parts of books, and when setting apart words that are unusual in standard English. To add to the confusion, there are single and double quotation marks. This lesson will teach you how to apply quotation marks in your writing.

► Direct Quotations

Direct quotations are someone's exact words. Use quotation marks to set apart a direct quotation.

Example

The assistant manager said I am a "very quick learner."

Example

I remember him saying, "We always have meatballs on Thursday."

Example

"Who left the storage closet unlocked?" I asked myself.

Words written in print or on signs receive quotation marks.

Example

The sign at the laundromat read, “Use tables for folding clean laundry only.”

Example

The website advertised, “Free shipping on orders over \$100.”

In academic writing, famous people are often quoted. Because these quotes are well known, it is doubly important to ensure that the quote is written exactly as it was originally said.

Incorrect Example

As Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said, “The only thing we need to fear is fear.”

Corrected Example

As Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

► **Dialogue**

Dialogue is a form of direct quotation because you are writing someone’s exact words. Dialogue is a conversation between two or more people, either real or invented, depending on whether you are writing fiction or non-fiction. Punctuating dialogue correctly involves understanding some rules beyond the rules that govern quotation marks. Dialogue requires knowledge of commas, capitalization, and end marks such as periods, exclamation points, and question marks, as well.

Example

“In the olden days, we walked two miles to school each day,” said Grandpa.

The expression *said Grandpa* is known as a tag. The tag in dialogue can appear at the beginning,

middle, or end of a quotation. Tags are punctuated differently depending on their placement in the sentence.

Example of tag at the beginning

Tyrone wondered, “What would happen if I used photographs from the Internet in my report?”

Note that the tag is followed by a comma, and the first word in the quotation marks is capitalized.

Example of tag in the middle of a sentence

“If I win the match,” thought Beatrice, “they will have to win three in a row to be champions.”

Note that a comma follows the last word in the first part of the quote and is placed inside the quotation marks. The tag is followed by a comma, and the second part of the quote is not capitalized.

Example of tag in the middle of two complete sentences

“Throughout history, there have been only a handful of leaders who came to power only in time to finish what their predecessor had begun,” stated Florence. “Our President Harry S. Truman was one of them.”

Note that a comma follows the last word in the first part of the quote and is placed before the quotation marks. However, when the first part of the quote is a complete sentence, a period follows the tag. Quotation marks start and end the second part of the quote, and it is capitalized.

Example of tag at the end

“Yesterday was a long time ago,” remarked Bonnie’s mother.

The above quotation is a sentence that would normally be punctuated with a period. Instead, a comma followed by quotation marks is used. A period is used after the tag.

Example of tag at the end with question mark
 “How often does this train run?” wondered Jorge.

Note the question mark appears inside the quotation marks, but the tag is not capitalized.

Example of tag at the end with exclamation point
 “Clear the way!” shouted Jan.

Note the exclamation point appears inside the quotation marks, but, as with question marks, the tag is not capitalized.

If the quote itself is not a question or an exclamation, but is included in a sentence that is a question or exclamation, the punctuation is placed after the quotation marks.

Example

Does anyone know who said, “Speak softly and carry a big stick”?

Note that the tag is a question, and the quotation is part of that question. However, the quotation itself is not a question, so the question mark follows the quotation marks. *No more than one comma or end mark is ever used at the end of a quotation.*

Each time there is a new speaker in the dialogue, begin a new paragraph by indenting.

Example

“Have you fed the cat today?” asked Miriam. “Yesterday, when I came home from work, she would not stop meowing until I gave her some food.”

“I haven’t fed her yet,” replied Alistair, “but as soon as I can find the can opener, I will.”

Exercise 1

Rewrite the following sentences adding the correct punctuation. Use the lines provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. The director of the program asked “who are the violin players”

2. “No trespassing” read the sign on the post.

3. The professor told us to “line up according to height”

4. “I am positive” muttered Walter “that I left my keys here”

5. “Get out of the building” shouted the custodian “there is an electrical fire in the switch room”

6. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address begins “four score and seven years ago”

► Titles

Quotation marks are used to punctuate the titles of shorter works, or works that are parts of a larger work. When you refer to a published piece in your writing, be sure to cite your sources. This will eliminate the problem of plagiarism.

Example of a short story title

The class discussed Leslie Marmon Silko’s “Tony’s Story.”

Example of a chapter title

Your assignment tonight is to read Chapter 12, “Civil Rights in America.”

Example of the title of a poem

“The Lamb,” by William Blake, reads like a prayer.

Example of the title of a song

We listened to “Strange Fruit” by Billie Holliday.

Example of the name of a T.V. show

“The Cosby Show” changed television comedy in the 1980s.

Example of the title of an article in a magazine or journal

Our homework was to read “The Maginot Line” from *Smithsonian Magazine*.

Note that with academic writing, it is important to cite your sources properly. Check with your supervisor or instructor to determine whether you are expected to use the Modern Languages Association or the American Psychological Association format. There are many popular citation guides that can help you; just be sure to follow the format exactly. When you conduct research, it is important to write down all the relevant information from

your sources. (See the LearningExpress Skill Builder entitled *Research and Writing Skills* for instruction in this area.)

The titles of longer works such as novels, movies, epic poems, collections of poetry, the names of magazines or newspapers, plays, musicals, or long musical compositions are typically italicized, or underlined if they are written by hand.

► Unusual Words

Use quotation marks to set apart technical terms, slang words, nicknames, or any unfamiliar terms.

Example

My grandmother’s recipe required a “zabaglione pan.”

Example

According to the magazine, the new teen singer is both “hot” and “cool.”

Example

They call him “Red” even though all his red hair fell out years ago.

Quotation marks are also used to indicate the use of irony.

Example

The “taxi” was actually a motorcycle with a poorly attached sidecar.

Example

The “magnificent roof garden” was actually two potted plants.

► **Single Quotation Marks**

Single quotation marks (‘ ’) set apart a quotation within a quotation.

Example

“We all heard the boss say, ‘The store will be closed on New Year’s Day.’”

Example

“Has anybody read ‘Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night’ by Dylan Thomas?” asked Ms. Dwyer.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following sentences on the lines provided using the correct punctuation. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

7. What do you suppose Carolyn meant when she said, I’m going to do something about this?

8. The English teacher told the class, “Today we are going to read Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll.”

9. The choir practiced Amazing Grace for the upcoming concert.

10. Because of her black hair, she was nick-named Raven.

11. “The coach told us to Start playing like we want to win! and then she stormed out of the locker room.”

12. The teenagers thought the old, dented van was mad wack.

Summary

The correct use of quotation marks can be confusing. When you are proofreading your writing, pay close attention to dialogue and other uses of quotation marks. Follow the rules you have learned in this lesson and your writing will be clear and graceful.

► **Answers**

Exercise 1

1. The director of the program asked, “Who are the violin players?”
2. “No trespassing,” read the sign on the post.
3. The professor told us to “line up according to height.”
4. “I am positive,” muttered Walter, “that I left my keys here.”
5. “Get out of the building!” shouted the custodian. “There is an electrical fire in the switch room.”
6. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address begins “Four score and seven years ago.”

Exercise 2

7. What do you suppose Carolyn meant when she said, “I’m going to do something about this”?
8. The English teacher told the class, “Today we are going to read ‘Jabberwocky’ by Lewis Carroll.”
9. The choir practiced “Amazing Grace” for the upcoming concert.
10. Because of her black hair, she was nick-named “Raven.”
11. “The coach told us to ‘Start playing like we want to win!’ and then she stormed out of the locker room.”
12. The teenagers thought the old, dented van was “mad wack.”

LESSON

18



Using Hyphens, Dashes, and Ellipses

LESSON SUMMARY

This lesson will show you how to add punctuation marks like hyphens, dashes, and ellipses to your final draft.

E

ach of these less commonly used punctuation marks serves a purpose in your writing and, when used correctly, can add flair and style to an ordinary piece of writing.

► Hyphens

Hyphens are used to join words in order to create compound words such as compound nouns and compound adjectives. Compound words are words that combine two or more complete words to make one noun. Compound nouns can be hyphenated, written as two or more words, or written as one word. On the next page is a chart showing the different types of compound nouns.

HYPHENATED	SINGLE-WORD	MULTIPLE-WORD
brother-in-law	bedroom	parking lot
runner-up	laptop	compact disc
well-being	textbook	couch potato
editor-in-chief	boyfriend	window seat
problem-solver	storeroom	guitar pick
Merry-go-round	walkway	power of attorney
drive-in	doorbell	hat rack

When combining two nouns that work together as one and are equally important, use a hyphen. These are called *coequal* nouns.

Example

Robert Redford started his career as an actor, but is now known as an *actor-director*.

Example

Pete Best was a *player-coach* for the Seattle Sounders soccer team.

Example

Hector nominated Stephanie to be *secretary-treasurer*.

Compound nouns with the prefixes *ex-*, *self-*, *half-*, *post-*, *pro-*, *vice-* and *all-* or that end with the suffix *-elect* use a hyphen.

Example

Jimmy Carter, the *ex-president*, won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Example

Because he was always thinking of new ways to get the job done, he became known as a *self-starter*.

Example

We all agreed the idea was *half-baked*.

Example

The team met in the locker room to watch *post-game* videotapes.

Example

She was not just an *all-star* in her division, but she made the *all-state* team, also.

Example

After the election, the news started calling Mr. Gilligan the *mayor-elect*.

The prefix *great-* is also followed by a hyphen when it is used to show a family relationship.

Example

My *great-grandfather* Ray served in both world wars.

Example

We had Thanksgiving with Alice, my *great-aunt*.

Use a hyphen to link the parts of a compound noun that include a prepositional phrase.

Example

The big purple jellyfish is known as a Portuguese *man-of-war*.

Example

The graduate student must successfully complete a placement as a *teacher-in-training*.

Example

He became known as a *good-for-nothing* because he had no skills.

Example

On Halloween, we carved *jack-o'-lanterns*.

Example

The freight service is literally a *fly-by-night* operation.

Use a hyphen to join two or more words that function as a single adjective *preceding* the noun.

Example

The union was involved in *hard-nosed* negotiations with a *high-powered* representative from the Board of Directors.

Example

A *well-trained* dog, even a mixed breed like a cocker spaniel and poodle mix known as a *cock-a-poo*, can be sold for hundreds of dollars.

If the words functioning as a single adjective *follow* the noun, they are not hyphenated.

Example

A dog that is *well trained* can be sold for hundreds of dollars.

Example

The union negotiations were *hard nosed* and the representative from the Board of Directors was *high powered*.

Use a hyphen to avoid awkward spellings, such as when a compound word would place three of the same letters in a row, or a prefix would alter the pronunciation without a hyphen.

Example

The *bell-like* sound is actually made by a gong.

Example

The friends became *co-owners* of the café.

Example

He had a *pre-existing* condition that kept him from participating in the *re-enactment*.

Use a hyphen to join a single letter to a word.

Example

The architect used a *T-square* to design the *A-frame* house.

Example

I sent an *e-mail* message to my friend.

Use a hyphen to join numbers to words used as a single adjective.

Example

The football team practiced their *two-minute* drill.

Example

Records that play at 45 rpm's are also known as *seven-inch* records.

Series of number-word adjectives use a hyphen-comma combination except for the last item in the series.

Example

To make the bookshelves, we bought *two-, four-, and six-foot* lengths of clear vertical grain pine.

Example

Depending on their grade in school, the children ran the *forty-, fifty-, or 100-yard* dash.

Use a hyphen to write two-word numbers between 21 and 99 as words.

Example

Many people do not want to retire at *sixty-five*.

Example

All *forty-five* children bought their school supplies at the *ninety-nine* cent store.

Use a hyphen to join fractions written as words.

Example

Some experts say that humans use less than *two-fifths* of the brain.

Example

When a carpenter cuts trim boards to finish a house, they must measure within *one-sixteenth* of an inch.

Use a hyphen to write the time of day as words.

Example

We had a lunch reservation at *one-thirty* and a meeting with the house inspector at *four-o'clock*.

Example

The shuttle took off at exactly *one-thirty-seven*.

Use a hyphen to indicate a score.

Example

The Red Sox beat the Devil Rays *9-4*.

Use a hyphen to form ethnic designations that are being used as adjectives.

Example

We watched the World Cup soccer games on the big screen television at the *Italian-American* Federation.

Example

An *African-American* playwright named Lorraine Hansberry wrote *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Note that if these compounds are used as nouns, the hyphen should be omitted.

Example

The playwright Lorraine Hansberry was an *African American*.

Use a hyphen to separate a word between syllables at the end of a line. Divide a word between pronounceable parts only, divide words with double consonants between the consonants, and divide words with prefixes and suffixes between the prefix or suffix and the root word. Words that already contain hyphens should be divided at the hyphen.

Examples

hand-ball com-mitment pre-view insati-able
all-powerful

Never use a hyphen to separate a one-syllable word, or divide a word so that a single letter stands

alone. Avoid dividing the last word of a paragraph and avoid dividing a number.

Examples of incorrect use of a hyphen at the end of a line

Do-g po-or immediatel-y aw-kward
sixty-five

Exercise 1

Rewrite the following sentences on the lines provided, adding hyphens where they are needed. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. Twenty six eight year old students visited the Lincoln Memorial.

2. The ex professional mountain bike racer is French Canadian.

3. A well spoken salesman told me about his great grandfather.

4. The post operation physical therapy consists of lifting eight pound weights.

5. Three fifths of the cars enter the S curves too fast.

6. The coach re examined the tapes of the game they lost 52 6.

7. The deck will have six, nine, and twelve foot sections.

8. The two pronged attack begins at exactly eight forty in the morning.

9. My know it all brother is the vice chair of the committee.

10. The all star pole vaulter is only five eight.

► Dashes

There are only a few correct uses of dashes. Many writers overuse dashes so that they detract from the content of the writing. Follow the rules listed and use dashes sparingly.

Note: A dash is a line the length of two hyphens when writing, or two hyphens in a row (- -) when typing. Many computer word processing programs will automatically turn two hyphens into a dash when the next word is typed.

- Use a dash to connect a phrase at the beginning of a sentence to the rest of the sentence.

Example

Liberty, equality, fraternity—these words were the rallying cry during the French revolution.

Example

Dulles, LaGuardia, Los Angeles International—these were the first airports that received federal money to make improvements.

- Use a dash to insert a comment.

Example

The varsity team—including three junior varsity players—left today for the state tournament.

Example

Mary is organizing—with the help of the P.T.A.—a fundraiser to help cover the costs of the new gymnastics program.

- Use a dash to mark a sudden break in thought, usually in dialogue.

Example

Make a right turn here and it is the house on the—watch out for that bicycle rider!

Example

The result is that we have six weeks to finish the entire—wait, that might be McPherson now.

- Use dashes to indicate omitted letters or words.

Example

“Hello? —Yes, this is Barry. —No, I haven’t seen her. —Yes, I will let her know. —Good bye.”

- Use a dash to set apart a long explanatory statement that interrupts a thought.

Example

The movie—with all its fast-paced dialogue and special effects—did not hold the interest of the audience.

Example

There was a sense of doom—a sense that everything they had been working for had become worthless within the blink of an eye—when the rival company unveiled their new model.

- Use a dash after a series of items to set apart a summarizing statement.

Example

Glass, tin, aluminum, plastic, and paper—all are included in the city’s new recycling program.

Example

The danceable rhythm tracks, the many guest vocalists, the amazing production—these are the reasons why this release has held the number one spot for so long.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following sentences on the lines, adding dashes where they are needed. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

11. I remember where I was what Beatles fan doesn't when I heard that John Lennon was shot.

12. Hello? Who? I am sorry, you have the wrong number.

13. Speed, a strong arm, a good bat these are the tools every center fielder should possess.

14. The bus ride the long, boring, bumpy bus ride took twice as long as they said it would.

15. Thanks for the delivery and here's your wait, there's no pepperoni on this pizza!

► **Ellipses**

Ellipses consist of three periods in a row, but they do not serve the same function as periods. Ellipses are not end marks. Instead, they indicate material that has been omitted or long pauses, especially in dialogue.

In quotations, use ellipses to show where words have been omitted. Ellipses can be used in the middle of a quote to shorten it, or at the end of a partial quote to indicate that it continues. If the ellipses come at the end of a sentence, use a fourth period to serve as an end mark.

Example

As Nelson Mandela said, "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people . . . it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Example

"What we are learning around the world is that if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. . . ."

Use ellipses to indicate a pause or hesitation.

Example

The train should arrive in Phoenix at . . . six-fifty P.M.

Example

And the Golden Globe goes to . . . Sebastian Jones, writer and producer for *Friends*.

Summary

This lesson has taught you how to fine-tune your writing using less common punctuation marks like hyphens, dashes, and ellipses. Use them correctly and sparingly to add flair and style to your writing.

► **Answers**

Exercise 1

1. Twenty-six eight-year-old students visited the Lincoln Memorial.
2. The ex-professional mountain bike racer is French-Canadian.
3. A well-spoken salesman told me about his great-grandfather.
4. The post-operation physical therapy consists of lifting eight-pound weights.
5. Three-fifths of the cars enter the S-curves too fast.
6. The coach re-examined the tapes of the game they lost 52-6.
7. The deck will have six-, nine-, and twelve-foot sections.
8. The two-pronged attack begins at exactly eight-forty in the morning.
9. My know-it-all brother is the vice-chair of the committee.
10. The all-star pole-vaulter is only five-eight.

Exercise 2

11. I remember where I was—what Beatles fan doesn't—when I heard that John Lennon was shot.
12. Hello?—Who?—I am sorry, you have the wrong number.
13. Speed, a strong arm, a good bat—these are the tools every center fielder should possess.
14. The bus ride—the long, boring, bumpy bus ride—took twice as long as they said it would.
15. Thanks for the delivery and here's your—wait, there's no pepperoni on this pizza!