

Tricky punctuation

Parentheses

Parentheses include extra information **not necessary for the sentence to make sense**. They can be three types of punctuation: **brackets, dashes, or commas**.

Bats sleep in the day and hunt at night. ← Sentence

Bats sleep in the day (**often in quiet, dark places**) and hunt at night.

Bats, **a type of winged mammal**, sleep in the day and hunt at night.

Bats sleep in the day and hunt – **for insects and other small creatures** – at night.

You must use two instances of the same punctuation mark. They can go in **the middle of sentences**. Brackets can sometimes go at the end of a sentence, but the sentence full stop should be outside the brackets.

Semicolons

Semicolons can be used in two ways: in place of a **co-ordinating conjunction** to join two main clauses, or to separate phrases in a list.

- 1) When joining two main clauses, the ideas should be linked but not closely.

I like cake and I eat it regularly. ← With co-ordinating conjunction

I like cake; I eat it regularly. ← With semicolon.

Dan runs quickly but he swims slowly. ← With co-ordinating conjunction.

Dan runs quickly; he swims slowly. ← With semicolon.

- 2) Semicolons separate phrases in a list, not just words.

I am going to buy carrots, potatoes, peas and apples. ← Use a comma.

I am going to buy crunchy carrots with no dirt on them; potatoes with no skin; peas from the frozen section; and Granny Smith apples because they are the tastiest. ← Use semicolons.

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Colons

Colons have two uses: to explain a main clause further or add emphasis using a word or phrase, or to introduce a list. They are **always used after a main clause**.

- 1) Colons explain or emphasis a main clause.

Cheetahs are fast. ← Main clause.

Cheetahs are fast: **they can reach speeds of 130 km/h**. ← Explains the main clause.

Cheetahs are fast: **incredibly fast.** ← Adds emphasis.

2) Colons introduce a list, replacing words like “such as” and “including”.

I like many sports: **hockey, karate, tennis and racing.**

Speech and dialogue

There are lots of rules! Remember that the person speaking is also using punctuation in their sentence, even though you can't hear it. Spoken sentences are still sentences and will also need a capital letter.

Inverted commas (speech marks) “ ” show that the words between them are words a person is saying.

Use a comma **inside inverted commas** to show the person's sentence is finished unless the spoken words are also the end of the written sentence.

Use exclamation or question marks inside the inverted commas as needed.

“This is complicated,” Jill said. “Are you sure this is all needed?”

If the reporting clause (the ‘Jill said’ part) comes before the speech, use a comma to separate them.

Rob responded, “Absolutely certain, unfortunately.”

Reporting clauses can also be in the middle of a sentence.

“This is a real pain,” Jill grumbled, “but I’m sure I will get the hang of it.”

← Notice this is the end of the written sentence as well as spoken, so a full stop is needed. ↓