

# The 15 Punctuation Marks.

In order of how much they do  
(and how hard they should be to learn)



## Period

Ends a sentence flatly



## Question Mark

Ends a sentence with curiosity



## Exclamation Mark

Ends a sentence with gusto



## Asterisk

Suggests a further comment, clarification or qualifier



## En Dash

Replaces the word "through" or "to" when suggesting a duration of time



## Semicolon

Joins two related complete sentences

Separates list items when commas are in the list items



## Brackets

Indicate editorial comments by someone other than the author

Indicate asides or other parenthetical information already in parentheses

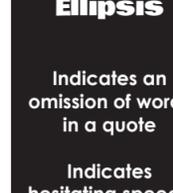


## Parentheses

Suggest related but unnecessary information

Clarify a writer's frame of mind

Indicate citations or page references



## Ellipsis

Indicates an omission of words in a quote

Indicates hesitating speech in dialogue

Suggests that something is being left out

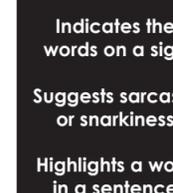


## Em Dash

Expands with emphasis a main clause

Separates and draws special attention to ideas

Suggests an interruption in thought or change in direction



## Quotation Mark

Indicates a direct quotation

Indicates a dictionary definition

Indicates the words on a sign

Suggests sarcasm or snarkiness

Highlights a word in a sentence

Indicates short media pieces, like poems, songs, articles, and chapter titles



## Colon

Expands or clarifies a main clause

Introduces lists

Comes after salutations

Separates hours from minutes

Separates titles from subtitles

Indicates dialogue in plays

Suggests ratios



## Hyphen

Creates compound adjectives

Combines two-digit numbers

Clarifies verbs with common prefixes

Joins prefixes to capitalized words

Joins a letter or a number to a word

Joins a prefix to a date

Separates words with same three letters in a row



## Apostrophe

As single quotation mark, indicates quote within a quote

Omits letters and numbers

Creates a plural for a single letter

Makes a noun possessive

Gives possession to a singular noun that ends in 's'

Makes abbreviations possessive

Creates plural possessions

Creates compound possessions

In headlines, used as a double quotation mark



## Comma

Separates items in a list

Separates coordinate adjectives

Separates coordinating conjunctions

Separates dependent clauses

Separates conditional clauses

Separates appositives

Comes after introductory phrases

Comes after interjections

Comes after direct address

Comes after a title

Separates the day of the month from the year

Separates numbers larger than 999

Separates cities from states

Comes after abbreviations i.e. and e.g.

Comes before quotations