

# PUNCTUATION MARKS

**Apostrophe:** It has three main uses: to indicate the possession, to stand in for missing letters or numerals, and to form the plural of certain expressions.

Ex: Thomas's dog is a cute little golden retriever (possession). I can't do that thing you asked (contraction).

**Brackets:** Square brackets are used in scholarly prose mainly to enclose material—usually added by someone other than the original writer—that does not form a part of the surrounding text.

Ex: In his memoirs, the author reveals, "The year we moved into the house [1985] was a difficult one for us, both emotionally and financially."

**Colon:** introduces an element or list only when the sentence preceding the colon is an independent clause (complete sentence).

Ex: The bookstore specializes in three subjects: art, architecture, and graphic design.

**Commas:** The comma indicates separation of elements within a sentence.

See comma worksheet for examples.

**Dash (en):** shows connection between two words without creating a new meaning.

Ex: I can't wait for the 2016–2017 NBA season!

**Dash (em):** creates a dramatic break in a sentence. Also used to indicate extra information.

Ex: I can't believe that the dog peed on the carpet—although it's not the first time.  
He said, "I love going to the movies! My favorite movie is—who is at the door?"

**Ellipses:** indicates that information has been omitted from a quote or sentence.

Ex: If only she had said...Oh, it doesn't matter now.

**Exclamation Point:** A stylistic punctuation mark that is used to mark an outcry or an emphatic or ironic comment. Should be used sparingly.

**Hyphen:** joins two or more words that create one new word.

Ex: I am eighty-three years old.

**Parenthesis:** sets off extra material from surrounding text.

Ex: He finally answered (after taking five minutes to think) that he did not understand the question.

**Period:** A period marks the end of a declarative or an imperative sentence. A period may also follow a word or phrase standing alone.

**Question Marks:** The question mark is used to indicate a direct question.

Ex: *Is there homework due before class tomorrow?*

**Quotation Marks:** quotes someone else's words.

Ex: Harry said, "He's got to go, today!"

**Semicolon:** used between two independent clauses (complete sentences) to show separation and correlation.

Ex: I can't believe Sara is not on speaking terms with John; they are such good friends.