

# ENGLISH MANUAL



## CHAPTER 16

### HOW TO PUNCTUATE?





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The English language is so peculiarly constructed that it can never give the correct meaning and never lead to a proper understanding **unless it is properly punctuated** as per the rules of grammar. By putting a comma or omitting it, the whole meaning of the passage may undergo different meanings totally opposite to each other, *e.g: Rama, Sita and Lakshmana went to the forest.* By removing the comma, Rama and Sita will refer only to one person Rama Sita and not two as we see when we insert a comma between; and the meaning also will be completely changed and lead to confusion of thought as there is no person like Rama Sita. Hence is the importance of punctuation in brief.

### VARIOUS MARKS EXPLAINED

The important marks are the **full stop**, the **comma**, the **colon**, the **semi-colon**, the **mark of interrogation** ( question mark ), the **mark of exclamation**, the **dash**, the **parenthesis**, the **inverted commas** ( the quotation marks ), the **apostrophe** and the **hyphen**. We shall see the uses of these individually:-

#### 1. THE FULL STOP

1. Two sentences are generally separated by a full stop. The next sentence will begin with a capital letter, **e.g:** “That is a book. It is on the table.” Thus, you see that, at the end of every **complete** sentence, you use a full stop.
2. A full stop is also used to mark abbreviations and initials, **e.g:** B.A., M.A., M.B.B.S., M.P., Mr. A.B.Chandran, etc.

#### 2. THE COMMA

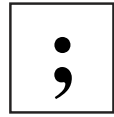
Just as the full stop is the longest pause, the comma represents the shortest pause.

1. It is used to separate repeated words, similar words, or a series of words in the same construction, **e.g:** Try, try again.

2. It is used to separate each pair of words connected by the conjunction “and”:  
*e.g:* High and low, rich and poor, gay and gloomy, all visit the Temple.
3. It is used after a Nominative Absolute:  
*e.g:* Dinner being finished, we left the room.
4. It is used to mark off a noun or a noun phrase in opposition:  
*e.g:* Rama, the son of Dasaratha, killed Ravana, the King of Lanka.
5. It is used after an adverbial phrase:  
*e.g:* In short, this is the truth of the matter.
6. It is used to mark off a participial phrase:  
*e.g:* Ghazini, having conquered India, returned home.
7. It is used to indicate the omission of a word:  
*e.g:* My father gave me a book, my brother a pen.
8. It is also used to separate a direct quotation from the rest of the sentence:  
*e.g:* “I am glad to see you,” said Balu.
9. A comma is usually placed after the following words, when they begin a sentence or when they are in the middle of a sentence:  
Moreover, however, besides, namely, lastly, hence, therefore, thus.....etc.:  
*e.g:* He had, however, already finished his work.
10. It is used to separate short co-ordinate clauses of a compound sentence as:  
*e.g:* Men may come, and men may go, but I go on forever.
11. *Yes* and *No* must be followed by commas when explanatory sentences follow them:  
*e.g:* Yes, I shall follow you.
12. A noun clause – whether subject or object – preceding a verb is separated by a comma.  
*e.g:* That he will succeed, is certain.
13. Exclamatory adverbs, and sometimes weak exclamations not followed by the exclamation mark, are indicated by commas.  
*e.g:* What, are you not afraid?
14. A comma is used to separate an adjective clause that is not restrictive in meaning, but is co-ordinate with the principal clause:  
*e.g:* We, who are elders, should know better.

15. A comma separates an adverbial clause from its principal clause.  
*e.g:* When I was a bachelor, I lived by myself.

### 3. THE SEMI-COLON

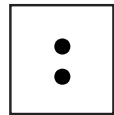


The semi-colon is a lengthened comma. It represents a pause of greater duration than that of the comma.

*e.g:* We met Ramu and Kannan at the post office; Govind joined us there soon.

You must consider the length of the pause you require; and your decision may be regulated by the length of the previous sentence.

### 4. THE COLON



The colon marks a still greater pause than the semi-colon and the purpose served by it is almost the same. But it should not be used as an alternative to that stop.

*e.g:* To err is human: to forgive, divine.

*Note:-* The colon is the heaviest stop after the full stop: but its use is fast dying out: its place being taken by the semi-colon. The essential difference in the usage of the semi-colon and the colon lies in the fact that the colon specially draw attention to what is coming after. The colon is still used to introduce a list, short quotations, or a direct speech. It may well be used as a substitute for word like *viz., i.e.* It is often accompanied by a dash after such words as thus, for instance, for example, as, as follows, etc.

### 5. THE QUESTION MARK



At the end of an interrogative sentence, that is, a sentence which asks a question, we put the mark of interrogation,

*e.g:* Who has done this?

But take care to see that you do not put the mark of interrogation after a sentence which says that a question is asked,

*e.g:* He asked him if he would come with him.

### 6. THE MARK OF EXCLAMATION



This is used after interjections such as expressing sudden feelings of joy, wonder, sorrow, admiration, surprise, etc.

1. What a merry hour we spent!
2. What a pity!
3. How wonderful!

4. Long live the noble King!
5. May you be happy!

### 7. THE DASH

— The dash is used to indicate a sudden stop or change of thought;  
*e.g:* If only I had not lost my purse – but why cry over the spilt milk?

### 8. THE PARENTHESIS

( ) It is used to separate a phrase or a clause from the main sentence.  
*e.g:* Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)  
 Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace.  
 He may be – who knows? – a very great man.  
 Mr.Ramu, strong as he is, cannot break the stone.

### 9. QUOTATION MARKS

“ ” The quotation marks or the inverted commas, should be used wherever a speech is reported direct.  
*e.g:* “I do not think it is good,” said Gayathri.  
 “Your reason?” asked Babu.

### 10. THE APOSTROPHE

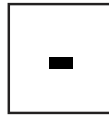
’ 1. It is used to form the genitive case, commonly used in the case of living things.  
*e.g:*Rama’s bow, Kitten’s paw, John’s wallet.

But note the following:-

At a stone’s throw, three weeks’ leave, duty’s call, mercy’s sake, the soul’s delight.

2. It is also used to mark the omission of letters:  
*e.g:* don’t, can’t, shan’t, won’t, I’ll, three o’clock.
3. It is also used for forming the plurals of letters and figures:  
*e.g:* Dot the i’s, dash the t’s, add four 5’s and eight 4’s.

## 11. THE HYPHEN



It is a shorter line than the dash.

1. It is used to connect the parts of a compound word:

*e.g:* to-day, to-morrow, heart-stirring, man-of-war, war-horse, will-o'the-wisp, etc.

2. It is also used to carry forward to the next line of writing some syllables of word:

*e.g:* deter-mine.



## CAPITAL LETTERS

Like punctuation, use of capital letters should also be done with care:

All words, in the nature of titles should begin with a Capital letter.

Study the following examples:-

*Names of persons:-* L. Narayan Rao.

*Office Title:-* The Rev. Father P. Thomas, S.J., Principal, The St. Joseph's College, Cuddalore.

*Descriptive Names:-* Ashoka the Great, Shivaji the Mighty.

*Proper Names and adjectives derived therefrom in general:-* India; Indian.

*Name of Days, etc:-* Good Friday, Christmas, February.

*Titles of books etc:-* The Bible, The Hindu, The Mail, etc.

*Abbreviated Titles:-* M.A., M.B.B.S., Rev.

In addition to the above, the following words must also begin with a capital:

1. To begin a sentence.
2. The first word after a full stop or its equivalent.
3. The first word of each line of poetry.
4. The first word of a speech directly quoted.
5. The exclamations, O, Oh! Ah!- usually.
6. The Pronoun-I