

Punctuation

Question Mark - Comma Instead:

Use a comma after a question that is not emphatic within a sentence if the sentence is not a direct quotation:

What's the use, we've lost.

But if the question is emphatic, insert a question mark in place of the comma:

Who cares? is the question.

Question Marks - General:

Use a question mark after a direct question:

Do you drive?

How far is it to Denver?

"What kind of drivel is that?" she asked.

Do not use a question mark after an indirect question or a request:

He asked her if she would like to dance.

May I have this dance.

Use a question mark after an emphatic question occurring within a sentence when it is not a direct quotation:

Who did it? is what we need to determine.

If the question is not emphatic, use a comma:

When will they learn, is a question many parents ask themselves.

Use a question mark after a quoted question at the end of a sentence:

The first thing out of his mouth is going to be, "Why me?"

Use a question mark after a parenthetical question:

The whole team showed up for the free lunch (wouldn't you?), so they ran out of food.

A question mark may be placed in parentheses to denote irony or doubt:

His confessions of love (?) were beginning to sway her.

The best (?) of their tunes should soon be on an album.

The question mark is placed inside quotation marks when it pertains to the matter quoted—outside when it pertains to the entire sentence:

"How can you say that to me?" she asked.

Can you believe he told me, "I was over at Joe's house"?

Use a question mark for each question in a series within a sentence:

What became of all the other guests?
my car keys? my clothes?

Question Mark - Period Instead:

Use a period at the end of an indirect question:

They could not discover who had done it.

I wonder how that happened.

Use a period after a question that is a request:

Will you please hand me the paper.

May I be excused.

Quotation Marks - General Usage:

Use double quotation marks to enclose a direct quotation:

"It would help if you stopped shouting," he moaned.

Throughout his career he maintained, "I've just been lucky."

"Wad it up," he said, "and stick it where the sun don't shine."

Do not use quotation marks to enclose indirect (paraphrased) quotations:

He told me to mind my own business.

She said that I could just drop dead.

Do not capitalize the first word of a quotation unless it is capitalized in the original text:

The most famous part of a famous speech goes:

"Four score and seven years ago. . ."

—BUT—

Kahlil Gibran describes one of the risks of love as,

". . . the sword hidden among his pinions. . . ."

Use quotation marks before each paragraph of a lengthy quotation, but only after the last paragraph.

Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation:

"If you can't 'knuckle down' and study more," the teacher said, "you're going to fail."

Use quotation marks to set off a quoted or emphasized word or short phrase:

Feeling like Cinderella, she awaited her blind date's "pumpkin" and "mice."

After the ball she said it was "grand."

It had been years since she had been out "on a real date."

Use quotation marks to enclose text after certain introductory words or expressions:

When you see the word "stop," please do so.

She was accustomed to being called "that little fool" by her parents.

Quotation marks may be used to denote irony:

After ten years of marriage, she gave him his "freedom."

For the next three hours, we "enjoyed" the candidate's speech.

Use quotation marks to enclose an unfamiliar word or expression the first time it appears in the text:

A Hypercard "stack" is a grouping of data within certain parameters set up by the Hypercard author.

Do not use quotation marks with indirect quotations such as the following:

I just wanted to say hello.

I wish you all the best.

Quotation Marks - With Other Punctuation:

Use a comma to set off direct quotations in dialogue form:

"A lot of good that does me," she said.

He told the press, "First things first."

Do not use a comma to set off an indirect (paraphrased) quotation:

He told me that it couldn't be done.

The period and comma are always placed inside of quotation marks.

"Get a life," she said.

The colon and semi colon are always placed outside of quotation marks.

It looked like Jim had made another of his
"amazing deals"; it always looks that way
at first.

The exclamation point and question mark are inside the quotation marks when the quotation is the exclamation or question, but outside if the exclamation or question is within the sentence.

She asked, "Are you nuts?"

She'd better never call me "nuts"!

Semicolon - Clauses:

Use a semicolon to join independent clauses in a compound sentence when the conjunction is omitted and/or when the clauses have a close relationship:

We threw a party for her; our efforts didn't do much to cheer her up.

They fired him for being late; he had it coming.

Use a semicolon to join coordinate clauses when they are long and/or contain commas:

She could swim for eight hours at a stretch, but her goal was ten; ten was possible; anything was possible if she just kept practicing.

Greatness does not visit those with comfortable, easy goals; it loves a challenge, a trial, a mountain.

Use a semicolon to join clauses with transitional words. Follow the transitional word with a comma:

Few travelers have crossed that pass unscathed; consequently, I avoid that route.

The Brewsters made it twice without mishap; however, they later lost two horses and a dog.

Semi Colon - Groups of Words:

Use a semicolon to join groups of words that are dependent upon the same statement:

Eating properly promotes good health;
it prevents obesity; it provides energy;
it regulates the system; and it can be tasty.

He quit school, opted for wife, kids, toil, and debt;
hustled, compromised, and moved to get work;
then forever envied his brother, the doctor.

Use a semicolon to join long phrases after a colon:

Anyone considering the purchase of computer software should be aware of some generalities: firstly, that catchy "whistles-and-bells" add-ons are rarely of any benefit; secondly, that price is a poor criterion for deciding which offering to buy; and finally, that buying a "third-party" book, instead of struggling with an inadequate manual, is the fastest way to proficiency with most new programs.

Semi Colon - With Other Punctuation:

A semicolon is placed outside of quotation marks:

Everyone should read "Common Sense"; it contains plain talk about inherited political power.

A semicolon, instead of a comma, is placed outside of parentheses enclosing an explanation of preceding matter if connecting punctuation is otherwise required:

She got back on her skates (she had taken a serious fall); then she managed to race to a very respectable third-place finish.