

# PUNCTUATION

## APOSTROPHE

### USE AN APOSTROPHE—

- 5.1 To indicate a contraction or the omission of letters or figures.

didn't, class of '98, it's

- 5.2 To form the plural of letters, figures and coined words.

ABC's  
the Gay 90's  
has been's

- 5.3 To indicate the possessive case of nouns.

girl's hat (singular)  
girls' hats (plural)

*Note:* If a one-syllable proper noun ends in an S or Z sound, the possessive case is shown by adding an apostrophe and an S.

Holmes's writing  
Haas's testimony

But if the proper noun ending in an S or Z sound has more than one syllable, the possessive case is indicated by adding the apostrophe only.

Ickes' memoirs  
for goodness' sake

### DO NOT USE THE APOSTROPHE—

- 5.4 Where the possessive case is understood.

Veterans Administration  
Teachers College

5.5 In geographical names.

Scotts Bluff, Neb.  
Devils Leap

5.6 With any possessive pronoun. The apostrophe is frequently misused with the third person possessive pronoun *its*.

COLON

**USE THE COLON—**

5.7 To introduce a lengthy quotation.

Regarding conditions in Japan, Henry Forrest said: "Despite the desolation in the bomb-stricken areas, the morale, . . . . ."

5.8 To introduce a complete clause or phrase which illustrates the meaning of the preceding clause.

Most people have some means of relaxing: For some it may be just sitting; for others it may be working with a hobby.

5.9 To introduce extensive lists.

Those attending the convention were: Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jameson, Mr. and Mrs. etc.

5.10 To divide hours and minutes in clock time.

10:45 p.m.

\* \* \*

5.11 The colon is always placed outside the quotation mark.

COMMA

The purpose of the comma is to make the meaning of a sentence clearer.

The following rules are intended as a guide in the use of the comma. In some cases, additional commas will be needed. If a great many commas are necessary to make a point clear, the sentence should be rephrased.

**USE A COMMA—**

- 5.12 To introduce a short direct quotation.

He said, "This is an unexpected pleasure."

- 5.13 To separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction.

His mother was born in France, and his father was of Spanish origin.

- 5.14 To separate a series of words or phrases. The comma is omitted before the conjunction which connects the last word of the series.

We took paper, pencils and books.

*Note:* Comma may be added before conjunction if needed for clarity.

He wanted three ties—the green, the blue, and the brown and yellow.

- 5.15 To set off an appositive.

John P. Marquand, author of "So Little Time,"

- 5.16 To set off expressions or words which are qualifying or explanatory or which constitute a minor change in thought.

The ascent, although it seemed hazardous, was a challenge to the climbers.

Let us give the plan a trial, nevertheless.

J. E. Jones, of Spokane, Wash., spoke . . . .

- 5.17 To indicate the omission of words understood.

Hazel is majoring in textiles and clothing; Agnes, in foods; and Sally, in applied art.

- 5.18 To set off thousands in numbers except in dates, serial numbers or page numbers.

5,280 feet  
p. 1302

\* \* \*

- 5.19 The comma is always placed inside quotation marks.

## DASH

### USE A DASH—

- 5.20 In place of *to*.

May 8–12  
Chapters IV–VI

- 5.21 Before a reference.

“Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what’s a heaven for?”

—Browning, “Andrea Del Sarto”

- 5.22 To indicate interpolations and breaks in thought.

Five of us—Mary went along that day—were in search of hidden treasure.

- 5.23 Before phrases or clauses that explain or emphasize a preceding clause.

Nothing is more valuable than a good name—a name that commands respect.

- 5.24 To set off enumerations.

Thousands of girls—fat ones, thin ones, young ones and those not so young—were wearing the same style of dress.

- 5.25 After a phrase which is implied in clauses listed thereafter.

Use your vacuum cleaner—

1. To remove dirt from carpets.
2. To dust moldings and picture frames.
3. To spray paint on furniture.

## EXCLAMATION POINT

### USE AN EXCLAMATION POINT—

- 5.26 To indicate an interjection or startled remark or to express an emotion.

Oh! What have I done!  
What a fool I have been!  
Ouch!

- 5.27 To lend emphasis to a warning or plea.

Stop! There's a red light.  
O Lord, I beseech thee!

\* \* \*

- 5.28 The exclamation point should be placed inside quotation marks only when it is part of the sentence quoted.

"For goodness' sake!" she exclaimed.  
Three cheers for that great song, "Dixie"!

\* \* \*

Avoid too frequent use of the exclamation point to express emotion. Expressive words are preferable.

## HYPHEN

### USE A HYPHEN—

- 5.29 Between two or more words combined to express a new idea.

kitchen-dining room  
artist-poet,

- 5.30 In prepositional phrase compounds.

mother-in-law  
attorney-at-law

5.31 To connect words used in an adjective sense (if ambiguity seems likely) .

vitamin-enriched bread  
 first-class hotel  
 1-year-old girl

5.32 After prefixes that are combined with words beginning with their terminal vowel.

co-owner  
 re-emphasize

5.33 To combine prefixes with a proper name.

ex-President Hoover

5.34 With spelled-out fractions.

two-thirds

**DO NOT USE A HYPHEN—**

5.35 With an adjective phrase that includes an adverb.

smoothly brushed hair

\* \* \*

For information on hyphenating specific words, consult Webster's International Dictionary.

**INTERROGATION POINT**

**USE THE INTERROGATION POINT—**

5.36 At the end of a sentence to indicate a query.

What was your purpose in coming here?

5.37 To express doubt as to accuracy.

The castle was built in 1455 (?) by a medieval king.

**DO NOT USE THE INTERROGATION POINT—**

- 5.38 With requests expressed in the form of a question.

Will you sit here, please.

- 5.39 With indirect quotations that express a question.

She asked if more guests were coming.

\* \* \*

- 5.40 Place the interrogation point inside quotation marks only when it is a part of the sentence quoted.

"Where are you going this fall?" he asked.  
Did you see Paul Robeson in "Othello"?

**PARENTHESES**

**USE PARENTHESES—**

- 5.41 To set off parenthetical comments where less distinctive marks might permit confusion to arise.

He tried to show surprise (that was difficult for him to do) and to make an answer that reflected this state of mind.

- 5.42 To inclose references.

The item referred to (Detroit News, March 10, p. 1) indicated this possibility.

- 5.43 To inclose nicknames.

General Dwight (Ike) Eisenhower has a new hobby.

- 5.44 To inclose numbers used in listings.

My choice is based on: (1) the candidate's record, (2) his ability to express himself, (3) his . . .

## PERIOD

**USE A PERIOD—**

- 5.45 To complete a sentence which states a fact or gives a command.

Monday was a cloudless day.  
Get in line, please.

- 5.46 After abbreviations.

Calif.  
N. M.

**OMIT THE PERIOD—**

- 5.47 After letters of well-accepted abbreviations, such as:

YWCA, CIO, USN, ROTC

- 5.48 After call letters of radio stations.

WHO, WOI

\* \* \*

- 5.49 The period is always placed inside quotation marks. Whether the period is placed inside parenthesis or brackets depends on whether it closes only material inside or closes a full sentence.

He left on the "Galloping Ghost."  
This is one of the latest developments (not yet published in full).

## QUOTATION MARKS

**USE DOUBLE QUOTATION MARKS—**

- 5.50 To inclose a direct quotation.

She said, "Let's go to Des Moines Saturday."

- 5.51 At the *beginning* of every paragraph in a long quotation, and at the *end* of the final paragraph.



- 5.52 To call attention to a word or term followed by its own definition.

By "style" we mean . . .

- 5.53 To inclose an unusual word or phrase or one that is used in a figurative sense.

"Run-over" is placed in the back of the book.  
Our baby is our "alarm clock."

- 5.54 To set off the exact titles of stories, books, articles, themes, pamphlets, music, pictures, mottoes, etc.

"We Knew When" was his first published story.

#### **USE SINGLE QUOTATION MARKS—**

- 5.55 For quotations within a quotation.

The toastmaster announced, "Judge Horn will now speak on 'Pleasure Hunting at Home.'"

If there is a third quotation within a quotation, use double quotation marks; if there is a fourth quotation, use single quotation marks.

#### **DO NOT USE QUOTATION MARKS—**

- 5.56 To set off nicknames. Use parentheses instead.

George Herman (Babe) Ruth died in 1948.

- 5.57 Before a decorative initial letter which begins a paragraph.

\* \* \*

Quoted matter may also be indicated by being set in italics, in type smaller than the preceding context, or by being indented. In any of these cases, no quotation marks are required.

## SEMICOLON

**USE A SEMICOLON—**

5.58 Between detailed lists in an extended sentence.

Back-of-the-book material in many magazines consists of short feature articles; time- and energy-saving tips; poems about children, pets, homelife, etc.; announcements of service leaflets, house plans, and winners of small contests; and "run-over" from main articles.

5.59 Between independent clauses not joined by a conjunction.

In the winter they spent many hours indoors; in the spring they plowed the fields.

\* \* \*

5.60 The semicolon is always placed outside quotation marks.

## DIVISION OF WORDS

The division of words at the end of a line should be avoided if possible. However, when division is necessary, observe the following rules.

### **DIVIDE WORDS BY SYLLABLES ACCORDING TO PRONUNCIATION—**

5.61 Whenever possible after a vowel.

legiti-mate                      democ-racy *not* demo-crazy  
deriva-tive

5.62 Or between two consonants bracketed by vowels if such division agrees with pronunciation.

syl-lable                              repen-tant

### **DO NOT DIVIDE WORDS—**

5.63 Which are already hyphenated. (They may be divided at the hyphen.)

mother-in-law

5.64 Of one syllable, or pronounced as one syllable, or do not divide after a one-letter first syllable.

break                      through                      against

5.65 To leave a two-letter carry-over unless such division is unavoidable in typesetting.

heat-ed  
cool-ly

## SPELLING

The importance of spelling proper names and all other words correctly cannot be overemphasized. Correct spelling not only is the mark of a competent journalist, but in the case of names and titles is essential for courtesy.

Whenever more than occasional misspellings occur in news articles, readers are disposed to question the ability and education of the staff members and place little confidence in the facts set forth. Names misspelled lose friends for any publication.

There is a place to find the correct spelling of any word. The alert journalist will make use of the sources of spelling information in his publication office or library. Some of these sources are:

General authority on spelling:

*Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*

Names of local residents:

*Local telephone directory*  
*City directory*

Names of students and faculty:

*College or University Directory*

American geographical names:

*U. S. Postal Guide*

Geographical names:

*National Geographic Society maps*  
*U. S. Board on Geographical Names Decisions*  
*U. S. Geographic Board—Sixth Report*

Names in the news:

*New York Times Index*  
*Facts on File*  
*World Words*

26 EDITOR'S HANDBOOK

Prominent Americans:

*Who's Who in America*

Prominent people of the world:

*Information Please Almanac*

*International World Who's Who*

*Biographical Encyclopedia of the World*

Technical terms and words:

*Handbooks of technical fields*