

PUNCTUATION MARKS IN ENGLISH

•

Full Stop /
Period

?

Question Mark

!

Exclamation Mark

,

Comma

;

Semicolon

:

Colon

—

Em Dash

—

En Dash

—

Hyphen

/

Slash

...

Ellipsis

()

Parentheses

[]

Square Brackets

{ }

Braces

“ ”

Quotation Marks

’

Apostrophe



HOW PUNCTUATION GUIDES A SENTENCE

End, pause, connect, and clarify

1

End the Thought



. Statement

The meeting has ended.



? Direct question

Has the meeting ended?



! Strong feeling

The meeting has ended!

2

Pause or Connect



Comma: light pause



Semicolon: links complete ideas



Full stop: ends the thought

It was raining, so we stayed inside.

It was raining; we stayed inside.

It was raining. We stayed inside.

3

Introduce or Add Information



Colon: introduces

Bring three things:
paper, glue, and scissors.



Dash: emphasises

The answer—surprisingly—
was correct.



Parentheses: adds extra detail

The café closes early
(at 4 p.m.).

4

Quote, Own, or Omit



Quotation marks: exact words

"Come inside," she said.



Apostrophe: possession or contraction

Sara's book / can't



Ellipsis: omitted or unfinished words

Well... perhaps.



vocabish.com



PUNCTUATION THAT CHANGES MEANING

Small marks, completely different messages

1. THE COMMA SAVES MEANING



Let's eat,
Grandma.

Inviting Grandma
to eat



Let's eat
Grandma.

Grandma becomes
the meal



2. COMMA OR SEMICOLON?



INCORRECT:

The room was cold,
I closed the window.



CORRECT:

The room was cold;
I closed the window.



TWO COMPLETE THOUGHTS → USE ; OR .

3. COLON OR SEMICOLON?

COLON



Introduces what
comes next

We need one thing:
patience.

SEMICOLON



Connects related
complete thoughts

I was tired;
I kept working.

4. HYPHEN, DASH, AND APOSTROPHE

HYPHEN



joins words

a well-known
story

DASH



creates
emphasis

The result—
unexpectedly—
was correct.

APOSTROPHE



shows possession
or missing letters

Hamza's notebook
it's = it is



NEVER USE AN APOSTROPHE FOR A REGULAR PLURAL.

