

S. Edgell's Writing Course Series Presents: Punctuation

Period-at the end of a sentence  
after Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Dr.  
after an abbreviation

Question-when forming a question  
Ex: "Whaaaat?"

Comma-separates clauses in a sentence  
listing items, things, or ideas in a series  
EX: My first day at my new job was great, but I realized very quickly that I need to wear more professional clothes.  
I am planning to buy new shoes, slacks, button down tops, and jewelry for my new job.

Exclamation-makes the sentence show emotion-angry, excited, scared, surprised  
Use with interjections

Apostrophes-to show ownership and contractions,  
EX: His shirts are on the hangers.  
The mother's heart is in the child's schoolroom.  
My students' books are expensive.

Semicolon-separate independent clauses  
EX: Darrel doesn't like to write at all; he thinks that he is bad at it because of some negative experiences he had in his high school English classes.  
Ms. Sanchez is a successful real estate salesperson; however, she was unable to sell her own house.

Colon-before a list or explanation  
EX: The state fair offers a significant amount of disgusting food: fried pizza, fried Twinkies, fried butter, fried Oreos, fried Cheerios, fried beer, fried Dr. Pepper, fried queso, fried pig ears, and fried bubble gum.  
The state fair offers a significant amount of disgusting food such as fried pizza, fried Twinkies, and fried butter.

Quotations-talking or thoughts marks, or direct quotes from another source  
Ex: I have always thought why should you have to tie your shoes when there are ways around it.  
I have always thought, "Why should you have to tie your shoes when there are ways around it?"  
I have always thought, "Why tie my shoes when Velcro makes it so much easier?"

Parenthesis-to enclose words that clarify or are used as an aside

EX: I used a dictionary (a large book that lists words and their definitions in alphabetical order) to find the word's definition.

Michael works at Target (one of my favorite stores), but rarely knows his weekly schedule.

Michael works at Target, but rarely knows his weekly schedule (which forces him to call in and ask, which really ticks off his managers).

Dashes-like parenthesis, to give side information or a definition or clarification

EX: I used a dictionary-a large book that lists words and their definitions in alphabetical order- to find the word's definition.

Ellipsis-omit words in a quote, or for effect...drama

EX: "Michael...rarely knows his schedule."

The streets were deserted and the doors bolted...Nathan was the only living soul left in the town. The zombie apocalypse had inevitably reached small town Midlothian, Texas.