

Answers (26 additions)

How's your punctuation?

1. The people of Haiti, who for decades have lived in abject poverty and violence, are unfamiliar with the workings of a true democracy.
2. I must remember to pick up apples, bananas, and oranges at the supermarket today.
3. Doug, the new supervisor, is very good at his job.
4. Abdominal exercises help prevent back pain; proper posture is also important.
5. The hospital held its annual fund raising event last week; it's an important source of funding for the new wing.
6. He visited three cities during his trip to Japan: Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto.
7. I know you like the word "unique," but is it necessary to use it ten times in one essay?
8. We interviewed three candidates for the job – all were rejected.



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Punctuation

Basic Punctuation Rules with Examples

Comma (,)

Use a comma before *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so* between two or more independent clauses.

- The director interviewed five applicants, *and* she decided to hire Mr. Jones.
- Mary enjoys drinking coffee, *but* Jim prefers green tea.

Use commas to join words or phrases in a list.

- The bank will notify all *shareholders, portfolio managers, and clients* about the new rate.
- I went to the store and bought *apples, oranges, and bananas*.

After an introductory word, a prepositional phrase, or dependent clause at the beginning of the sentence.

- *Unfortunately*, we could not get the tickets.
- *Across the street*, a new millionaire will be erecting a new building.
- *When all possible risks were analyzed*, Cara decided to purchase insurance.

Use commas to set off appositives (extra information).

- Mr. Collins, *the new dean*, proposed creating a new course on child education.
- James Joyce, *Mary's favourite author*, wrote many stories and plays.

Use a comma after the salutation or after the closing of a letter.

- *Dear Mary,*
- *Sincerely yours,*
- *Regards,*

Use a comma between the day and the year, and between city and province or country.

- *May 5, 2008*
- *London, England*

Semicolon (;)

Use a semicolon to join two sentences which are relatively short and are closely related.

- Alan is interested in a job in marketing; he also wants to travel.

Use a semicolon before words like “however” and “therefore” between independent clauses.

- Salaries begin at \$35,000 annually; however, they can reach over \$70,000 soon.

Dashes (–)

A dash is used to mark an abrupt change in a sentence or to begin and end a parenthetical word, phrase, or clause. Dashes add emphasis to the content.

- To some of you, my proposals may seem extreme – even unusual.

Use a dash to set off an appositive phrase that already includes commas.

- The sisters – Cara, Claire, and Sam – arrived at the party together.

Colon (:)

Use a colon after the greeting of a business letter and after the markings in a memo.

- Dear Sir: To: From: Re:

Use a colon to introduce a list, but never use a colon after any form of the verb “to be”.

- The success of your company depends on the following: determination, selflessness, vision, and courage.

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(Check your answers on the back)