



# Punctuation

## Exercise 43: Internal Punctuation: The Comma

Insert commas in the following sentences. Could some be punctuated in more than one way?

1. It was a fascinating hypothesis, but it was greeted with silence.
2. Some people can tell where commas are required when they read the sentences aloud and listen for the natural pauses. **[no punctuation added]**
3. Jamil needed some help with his lab report, so he thought he would make an appointment with a tutor.
4. They make faces at each other each time they pass on the street. **[no punctuation added]**
5. You live, you learn.
6. The dog walked and fed, I decided to relax with a murder mystery.
7. Because the snow is plentiful this year, the snowboarding is especially good.
8. Before you move to Paris, you should study French.
9. The things I expected from my education were maturity, spiritual growth, and a career.
10. However you look at it, the solution needs to be simple and practical or the boss will not approve of it.
11. At the end of the lecture, I had no clearer understanding of the subject than I had when I came in.
12. Parsnips, sardines, and peanut butter were the ingredients for my new culinary creation.
13. As usual, before going to bed, I turned on the eleven o'clock news.
14. After Anne finished the report, which showed marked improvement in profits, she seemed less happy than she had before she began the report.
15. Auditions will be held at the concert hall at 2:00 p.m. on November 30, 2017.
16. "I'm glad Henry is going with us to the lake," said Martha. "He's a qualified life guard."

17. Yesterday we visited family in Port Elgin, New Brunswick, and tomorrow we're going to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

### Exercises 44–45: Internal Punctuation: The Semicolon/The Colon

Insert semicolons or colons in the following sentences. Could some be punctuated in more than one way?

1. Everyone thought the technological revolution would reduce our use of paper; we were wrong.
2. The next step was obvious: they would need to get married.
3. I had not been back in ages; therefore, I was surprised to see all the changes.
4. The crew needed to replace several things on the ship: sails, cannons, the mizzenmast, and various parts of the deck.
5. The strike was over; the people were jubilant.
6. My last piece of advice is the most important: break your larger goals down into groups of smaller ones.
7. This sales letter doesn't acknowledge women exist; therefore, they will never buy the product.
8. The exercises that follow serve two types of people: those looking to strengthen their core and those looking to improve upper-body strength.
9. Some people eat to live; others live to eat.  
Some people eat to live, others live to eat.
10. The dictator's statue stood for almost thirty years; however, it was toppled in less than an hour.
11. When drafting his essay, Henry needed to write a clear thesis statement; to outline the order of his paragraphs, his likely sources, and supporting evidence; and to tie his thesis statement and arguments together in the conclusion.
12. When Michel coached his clients about goal setting, he told them to think of the acronym SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.
13. In *Lost Horizon*, James Hilton writes of an ideal society that lives by only one rule: be kind.

### Exercises 46–47: Internal Punctuation: The Dash/Parentheses

Set off the italicized interrupters with commas, dashes, or parentheses. Be prepared to defend your choices.

1. It was seven o'clock in the evening—a mild autumn evening—and the crickets were beginning to chirp.
2. No one (at least no one who was present) wanted to disagree with the speaker's position.
3. Early one Sunday morning—a morning I will never forget—the phone rang unexpectedly.
4. Since it was only a mild interjection (no more than a barely audible snort from the back of the room) he went on with scarcely a pause, but with a slightly raised eyebrow, and finished his speech.
5. And then suddenly, out of the blue and into my head, came the only possible answer.
6. But we sat silent—the scene before us on the stage had left us stunned.
7. He was a big fan of his hometown hockey team—unless they were losing.
8. Margo said that, for her, the most enjoyable part of the dinner was the chocolate cake—typical Margo.
9. While canoeing with my brother (something I will never do again) we saw black bears and a bald eagle.

### Exercises 49–51: End Punctuation: The Period/The Question Mark/The Exclamation Point

Insert periods/question marks/exclamation points in the following sentences. Could some be punctuated in more than one way?

1. Cartoons are enjoyed by both children and adults; sometimes adults enjoy them more.
2. I cannot believe she asked me if I knew who she was!
3. His belly shook; he had a red nose; he was surrounded by reindeer.
4. Atwood uses figurative language; however, the literal sense is sufficiently clear.
5. At what time does the performance begin?
6. We started to edit the next edition of the newsletter; soon the office was littered with coffee cups and paper.
7. Oh, no! Have we arrived too late to see Dr Kapoor?
8. We pushed off from the shore; the canoes were buffeted by the waves; we found ourselves unexpectedly in the water.
9. Could you tell me if I have filled out this form correctly?

10. Things went suspiciously well: the first person to look at the house wanted to buy it.
11. What are your plans after work today?
12. Peter's new kitten is lost! We've been looking for it for hours!

### Exercise 52: Quotation Marks

Insert quotation marks in the following sentences. Could some be punctuated in more than one way?

1. The man on the phone asked, "Do you have a few minutes for a quick survey?"
2. The professor's frustration was obvious when she spoke: "I don't know how else I can explain this concept to you."
3. "How much does it cost to rent a hot-air balloon?" the hopeful group of young students asked.
4. Although it is doubtful Marie Antoinette ever said "Let them eat cake," it is the phrase most commonly associated with her.
5. Scholars have variously described academic disciplines as "silos, barricades, ghettos, and black boxes," using metaphors of containment.
6. Kristy yelled "Over here!" and we all looked to see what she'd found.
7. "You need to pick up milk on the way home," said Jackson, "and we need bread, too."
8. "What's the best time to call you?" she asked.

### Part V Review: Using Punctuation

#### A. CORRECTING PUNCTUATION

Correct any errors in punctuation in the following sentences, many of which come from students' papers. You may also want to make other improvements—practise your revising techniques.

1. Rainer Maria Rilke says, "Love occurs when two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other."
2. I believe that, for a number of reasons, genetically modified food should be carefully regulated.
3. He was not a frightening poltergeist but an irritating one; he hid the remote control and moved the coffee table.

4. Many of his plays are about royalty, as in the Lancastrian tetralogy *Richard II*, *Henry IV (1)*, *Henry IV (2)*, and *Henry V*.
5. His childlike features were deceptive, as we discovered when the alien from the planet Zotar began to give us detailed instructions on how to build a time machine.
6. When you spend time with close friends, you get a different perspective: life seems less narrow and serious.
7. With him, too, she felt comfortable.
8. I would like to wake up in the morning—especially a beautiful morning such as this—and not feel the burden of work.
9. The encounter that deepened his feelings more occurred at age nine. **[the comma after “more” has been removed as it is a comma fault]**
10. Therefore, one must always remember to be polite when encountering a ghostly stranger in a train station.
11. This, then, was the plan: return to our campsite for the night and tackle Black Tusk in the morning.
12. I joined in, dancing haltingly at first and then more confidently.
13. As a person exercises, the muscle of the heart becomes stronger; therefore, it can pump more blood while beating less.
14. However, I always wake up the next day with the worst sort of headache: the emotional headache.
15. The meal started with grilled artichokes followed by mushroom ravioli, and finished with a lemon tart.
16. It was, after all, exactly what he had asked for.
17. Crisp memories of laughing eyes, loving smiles, and peaceful, easy feelings still linger.
18. A computer hard drive is easy to install: just remember to ground yourself before you touch the hard drive.
19. Did Sheila Watson write *The Double Hook*?
20. Eighteenth-century mathematicians, unlike their counterparts in the seventeenth century, were able to develop both pure and applied mathematics. Leonhard Euler, a notable genius in both these fields, contributed invaluable to every branch of mathematics.

21. Another classic film that explores the effects of war on individual lives is *Casablanca*. [the commas appearing around the *that*-clause have been removed, as the clause is restrictive and should not be set apart with punctuation]
22. It began to rain; nevertheless, since they were on the sixteenth fairway, they went ahead and finished the round.
23. When the tyrant stood up and said, “You rascals, you will get what you deserve!” a brick fell on his head.
24. To me, this indicates that, although he remembers the details of the events he describes, there is an enormous space of time—between them (the events) and the present—that makes the details intangible.
25. The sounds of the sonata are soft and never harsh, which helps create the melancholy mood.

## B. USING PUNCTUATION

Punctuate the following sentences as you think best, indicating possible alternatives and places where you think punctuation is optional. Be prepared to defend your choices. Some sentences may not need punctuating.

1. When the meeting ended, he went to a pub for a drink.
2. Doggedly, Peyvand finished his essay.
3. Soon, [optional comma] those parts became unappealing, and she decided to fire her current agent.
4. In 2000, he moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and bought a small, reputable art gallery specializing in expensive, striking, white, minimalist plastic sculpture.
5. She felt uneasy about the trip, yet she knew she had to go and meet her sister flying in from Hong Kong.
6. I took the book that I didn't like back to the library, but I still had to pay a fine.
7. Mary, Winnie, and Cora came to the party together but left separately.
8. He had a broad, engaging smile, [optional comma] even though he had three teeth missing.
9. Having heard all she wanted, Bridget walked out of the meeting.
10. But once you've taken the first few steps, the rest will naturally be easy.
11. The poem was short; the novel was long; the poem was good, the novel better.
12. Perhaps we can still think of some way out of this mess. [no punctuation added]

13. But Canadians don't think that way: they prefer to sit back and wait.  
But Canadians don't think that way; they prefer to sit back and wait.
14. Last summer, **[optional comma]** we visited Hastings, the site of the battle won by William the Conqueror in 1066.
15. A warm bath, a good book, and freshly laundered sheets were all she wanted.
16. There are only three vegetables I can't tolerate: turnips, turnips, and turnips.
17. In the good old days, the doctor, a specialist in family practice, made house calls all morning.
18. August 16, 1977, is when Elvis Presley died.
19. He had to finish the novel quickly, or he wouldn't get his advance.
20. We arrived, we ate, we partook in boring conversation, and we departed—that's all there was to the evening.
21. You must plan your budget carefully in times of inflation, so remember to buy lottery tickets.
22. She is the only woman I know who wears pantyhose every day, **[optional comma]** whatever the season.
23. His several hobbies were philately, woodworking, chess, and fishing.
24. The two opponents settled the question amicably at the meeting, **[optional comma]** and then went home to write nasty letters to each other and to the editor of the local newspaper.
25. He would rather make up a lie than stick to the boring truth. That was his downfall.