

PUNCTUATION MARKS

Symbol	Name	How to Read	Usual Purpose
.	period <i>full stop (BrE)</i>	pause	1. Ends a complete thought. 2. Ends an abbreviation.
?	question mark	rising pitch on last word of a yes/no question	Tells you an answer is required.
(?)	question mark within parentheses		Tells you the earlier information has not been checked and may be wrong.
!	exclamation point	higher pitch, longer, louder	Highlights a strong feeling or point.
,	comma	shorter pause than that used for the period	Separates items in a list.
, words,	commas	softer voice	Inserts additional information that is of lesser importance than the enclosing sentence.
;	semicolon	pause	Connects two closely related thoughts.
:	colon	pause	A list or clarification follows.
'	apostrophe		1. Shows possession. 2. Marks missing letters in contractions.
" "	quotation marks <i>inverted commas (BrE)</i>		1. What someone said exactly. 2. Marks minor titles of works. 3. Marks non-English words.
-	hyphen		1. Joins compound words. 2. Joins compound adjectives before a noun. 3. Breaks long words at the end of a line of type.
--	dash		Indicates a dramatic break from the main part of the sentence.
-- words --	dashes		Highlights additional information.
/	slash		Shows choices. For example, "he/she."
*	asterisk		Shows additional information after its partner asterisk.
()	parentheses <i>brackets (BrE)</i>	Do not read aloud information between ().	Inserts helpful information.
[]	square brackets		text added by editor
{ }	braces		for mathematical equations
...	ellipsis points		1. Words have been removed from a sentence or paragraph. 2. Shows a continuing thought or feeling when at the end of a sentence.
~	tilde <i>pronounced</i> ['tɪl-də]		Used in some Web addresses.