Types of Punctuation:
As we go through the examples, please note which sentences are correct and which incorrect under each category.

END PUNCTUATION

Periods (.) end ordinary sentences.

1. Punctuation is great.

Question Marks (?) end questions

1. Are you feeling ill?
2. “Are you feeling ill,” he asked?

Exclamation Points (!) – These end commands or exclamations. These are useful when writing dialogue.

1. The students were happy to hear the exam was open-book!
2. “Fix the light. That’s an order!”

JOINING AND LISTING PUNCTUATION

Commas (, ) can join two simple sentences, or independent clauses, only when accompanied by a joining word such as “but,” “yet,” or “since.”

1. The snowstorm was fast approaching, but the ship continued to embark on its journey.
2. The girl fell down, it was slippery.

Commas are also used to join a series to form a complete sentence. Although it isn’t always necessary to use a comma before the word “and” in a series, it’s a good practice.

1. She knows three languages: French, Italian and Russian.
2. He likes to play soccer, volleyball, and ice hockey.

Semicolons (;) can also join two complete sentences to create a compound sentence. They are often followed by words such as “however,” “in fact,” “still,” etc.

1. He had waited until the last minute to purchase his textbooks; meanwhile, his roommate already purchased all of her books.
2. She played volleyball; because she liked it.
Colons ( : ) may be used to join two separate clauses when you wish to emphasize the second.

1. Monteith, Wilbur Cross, and the Classroom Building were all renovated: several buildings at Storrs underwent construction over the summer.
2. Several buildings at Storrs underwent construction over the summer: Monteith, Wilbur Cross, Gample Pavillion, and the Classroom Building were all renovated.

Colons may also separate an independent clause from its respective list, quotation or appositive.

1. Tom purchased new sailing gear from the store: boots, wetsuit, and jacket.
2. The book contained several themes: including drama, action, and heroism.

Parentheses ( ( ) ) emphasize the content they surround. They place more emphasis on the enclosed content than commas. You can also use parentheses to isolate nonessential material such as dates or clarifying sources.

1. Homer D. Babbidge (1925-1984) was one of the most productive presidents at the University of Connecticut.
2. Homer D. Babbidge was the most productive president of UConn (1925-1984).

Dashes ( - ) set off or emphasize content within a pair of dashes or that which follows a single dash. The emphasis is stronger than with a pair of parentheses. Dashes also extract appositives (when in list form), or a word or list that clarifies the preceding noun. Use a dash to set off an appositive phrase that already includes commas.

1. The three men—the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker—all became bored with their professions.
2. The dog—wagged its tail—to show he was happy.

Quotation Marks ( “” ) are most commonly used around direct quotes, or information taken from another source. However, you may also use quotation marks to indicate the novel or ironic use of a single word or phrase.

1. Discontent with the current government sparked a “revolution from below,” where the lower classes quickly revolted.
2. Her name was “Allison.”

Use quotation marks around the titles of short items (stories, poems, articles, chapters, and episodes of television or radio shows, etc.). Use italics or underlining to indicate the titles of long items (novels, films, TV series, etc.).

1. “Moby-Dick is the longest book I’ve ever read.
2. Poe’s “The Raven” is my favorite poem.
Proper Punctuation Handout

Choose the proper punctuation mark to complete the sentence. Circle the answer you feel is most appropriate.

1. _The Metamorphosis,_ by Franz Kafka, was one of her favorite short stories.
   " — "  - or-  ( )

2. The mayor _Michael Bloomberg_ proposed a new project that would transform the Upper East Side.
   ( )  - or-  , ,

3. After the food fight, the principal exclaimed to the culprits, “Now, go to my office_”
   .  - or-  !

4. She went to the grocery store_ while in the produce section, she ran into her favorite professor from college.
   ;  - or-  ,

5. They are taking the same courses next semester: Chemistry, Anthropology, English_ and Art.
   ,  - or-  .

6. Introduction to Communication _COMM 103_ offers a comprehensive overview of the basics of communication, focusing on writing, reading, text messaging, and Facebook posting.
   ( )  - or-  “ “

Write your own sentence featuring four (4) different punctuation marks:

More questions? Contact the Avery Point Academic Center at 860-405-9058 or email us at apac@uconn.edu.