



**UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN**  
**ILORIN, NIGERIA**

# **FUNDAMENTALS OF THE USE OF ENGLISH**

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# Chapter 9

## PUNCTUATION: COMMON TYPES

Basambo Nurat Salihu

### Objectives of the Chapter

At the end of the chapter, the students are expected to:

- (i) list the various punctuation marks and their accompanying symbols;
- (ii) explain the uses of each of the punctuation marks;
- (iii) differentiate between punctuation marks with similar uses;
- (iv) use punctuation marks correctly in given sentences and or passages;
- (v) revise and correct badly punctuated passages; and
- (vi) present an argument on the imperativeness of punctuation marks in written discourse.

**Resources:** See reference list.

### Introduction

As students learn to write, they must apply punctuation marks correctly and appropriately, using proper punctuation in writing is of utmost importance for clear and precise communication. Punctuation is derived from a Latin word *punctum*, which means inserting points or stops in writing. Punctuations are mechanics of writing which are useful to regulate a write-up so as to clarify meaning that gives direction in writing. In other words, punctuation marks are symbols used to aid the precision and comprehension of a write-up. Therefore, punctuation mark is a key constituent of writing, it is especially important in academic writing and when wrongly used; it can alter the meaning of a written text. For example:

*It is time to eat Mary!*

*It is time to eat, Mary!*

*It is time to eat, Mary?*

Meanwhile, wrong placement of punctuation marks can completely change the intended meaning of a sentence. For instance, within the examples above, disparities in meaning are created by the simple differences in punctuations. So, punctuation plays very significant role in giving anticipated meaning to our write-ups.

Below are common types and uses of punctuation marks with examples:

1. Full stop/ Period (.)
2. Question mark (?)
3. Comma (,)
4. Semicolon (;)
5. Exclamation mark (!)
6. Colon (:)
7. Apostrophe (')
8. Hyphen (-)
9. Dash (—)
10. Bracket/Parentheses ( )

11. Ellipsis
12. Capital
13. Slash
14. Quotation

1. Full  
end  
a.  
b. l  
c. V  
d. C  
e. l
- 1b. Simi  
Please subm

The Departm

- 1c. Full s  
www.  
www.
2. Quest  
stop in a.  
a. How a  
b. When  
c. Is the  
d. Who  
e. Are  
f. When  
2b. A ques  
particular

3. Comma
- 3a. It is used  
a. We r  
b. The  
c. The  
3b.  
c.

- 3c. Furt  
and  
a. f  
3d. Co  
a.  
b.  
c.

4. S



11. Ellipsis (...)
12. Capital letter
13. Slash/ Oblique
14. Quotation mark (")

1. **Full Stop or Period (.)** also known as terminal punctuation mark is used to indicate the end of a complete statement, a mild command or an indirect question. E.g.
  - a. The children love cycling.
  - b. Nigeria is the 3<sup>rd</sup> oil producing country in the world.
  - c. You need to indicate the venue of the exams.
  - d. Cheetah is the fastest land animal.
  - e. Kindly show me the gas station.
- 1b. Similarly, **full stops** are used to signify abbreviations:  
Please submit your assignment on or before **10am.** on Monday.

The Department needs phonetics lab, language lab, **etc.** for functional teaching.

- 1c. **Full stops** are also used in websites and email addresses:  
[www.unilorin.edu.ng](http://www.unilorin.edu.ng)  
[www.google scholar.com](http://www.google scholar.com)
2. **Question mark (?)** is used to indicate a direct question. It serves the function of a full stop in a sentence.
  - a. How old is your brother?
  - b. When are you going on break?
  - c. Is that your new car?
  - d. Who is your personal tutor?
  - e. Are you the new president
  - f. When are we going for the shopping?
- 2b. A question mark can also be used to indicate that the writer is uncertain with a particular statement.
3. **Comma has different uses:**
  - 3a. It is used to separate items in a list e.g.
    - a. We need to buy milk, eggs, flour, and sugar for the cake
    - b. The car is cute, spacious, stylish, and affordable.
    - c. The top websites in the world are Google, WhatsApp, and Facebook.
  - 3b. Comma can also be used to separate words that are not part of the main sentence e.g.
    - a. Frankly, I don't like his attitude.
    - b. Hopefully, we will get the questions tomorrow.
  - 3c. Furthermore, comma is used to separate linking words that connect one sentence to another e.g.
    - a. Her father wanted her to get married. Though, she had other plans.
  - 3d. Comma is used to connect two independent clauses using coordinating conjunction:
    - a. I waited for her for over five hours, but she never came.
    - b. I have never been to Israel, so I am going there for a conference this summer.
    - c. They searched everywhere for their son, but they couldn't find him.
4. **Semi-colon (;)** is used to combine closely related sentences.
  - a. His parent wanted him to study Engineering; however, he had other plans to study medicine.



- b. This is a great movie; in fact, it is one of the best I have ever watched.
  - c. The restaurant serves spicy food; though the prices are ridiculously high.
  - d. I really hate to be late for a meeting; though, I am usually early.
  - e. Banks need to be more innovative; otherwise, they may lose their customers.
5. **Exclamation mark (!)** is used to convey strong emotions; It is used to show different feelings like joy, fear surprise anger, etc.
  - a. I am really thrilled about my new job!
  - b. I told you to get out!
  - c. I can't believe this!
- 5b. Furthermore, exclamation mark can be used after an interjection:
  - a. Ouch! You pinched me!
  - b. Wow! That looks amazing!
6. **Colon (:)** is used to indicate listed items or a quotation in a sentence. It can also be used to further reaffirm or clarify a complete sentence.
  - a. Whenever you drive, you must do the following: wear your seat belt, focus on the road and obey traffic rules.
  - b. Sentences are classified into the following: structure and function.
  - c. Let me make this very clear to you: if you fail your exam, I will seize all your phones and laptops.
  - d. The commissioner had this to say: "we are here to win the election, not to destroy the government."
  - e. Her principles are glaring: honesty, promptness and openness.
7. **Apostrophes (')** are marks used to show possession:
  - a. Allah's mercy is endless.
  - b. The girls' club is next street.
  - c. Today is my brother's birthday.
  - d. Maryam's new car is blue.
- 7b. They are marks used to show omission of letter (s) in a word. They are used to mark or indicate contractions, e.g.
  - a. We can't allow them to have their ways.
  - b. I'm a teacher.
  - c. He'll still be waiting at the train station.
  - d. My mother doesn't like the idea,
  - e. Cole didn't know the consequences of his actions.
8. **Hyphen (-)** is a mark used to link or join two related words together to form compound words:
  - a. The world-best graduate use computer- assisted language learning.
  - b. Dele likes the part-time cooks.
  - c. My Father-in-law is kind hearted.
- 8b. Hyphen is also used after prefixes:
  - a. The ex-president of Nigeria is from Niger Delta.
  - b. The pre-writing stage is the most difficult part.
9. **Dash (-)** is longer than the hyphen, it is used to signify a sharp break in thought or separate part of a sentence:
  - a. Wait a second — you haven't paid.
- 9b. Dash is equally used to show a break in a sentence:
  - a. I can't wait for the trip —I am so excited.
- 9c. Dash can be used to indicate a range as well:
  - a. The train is from Lagos—Kano.



- b. Nigeria came under the colonial rule of the British from 19th—20th century.
10. **Brackets ( )** are used to separate information or thought that is not crucial to the meaning of the sentence in the sense that if you remove the information in the brackets, the sentence's meaning remains the same:
- a. She asked Bafarawa (her so called mentor) for a loan.
- b. Mary (the girl next door) is getting married tomorrow.
11. **Ellipsis (...)** is used to specify exclusion, particularly of letters or words. Ellipses are frequently used within quotations to jump from one phrase to another, omitting words that do not necessarily hinder the sentence's meaning:
- a. Our fathers fought the war... now, the freedom is ours.
12. **Capital letter** is used at the beginning of a sentence. Also, the first letters of all proper nouns should be capitalized:
- a. The best footballer of the year is Musa Ahmad.
13. **Slash/oblique (/)** is used to separate optional words or phrases :
- a. Do you want cash/transfer?
14. **Quotation marks or inverted commas(“”)** are used to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works:
- a. And finally she said, “Stand up and go to the kitchen to make dinner”.
- b. “It is ten o'clock,” she said.
- 14b. Begin each quotation with the uppercase letter. However, when the quoted sentence is in two parts, then the second part begins with a lowercase letter. For instance:
- a. “I thought she was a virgin,” Wale said, “but she isn't.”
- 14c. Single quotation mark is used to enclose a quotation within the quoted sentence:
- a. As the teacher reminded us, “We should never forget the work of Chinua Achebe, who said, ‘Africa has a dream.’”
- 14d. **Quotations** are also used to mark the titles of journal articles, short stories, poems etcetera. Example:
- a. The Department of English recently published an article entitled “New Trends in Syntax” in which the relevance of the English grammar was discussed.

### Conclusion

Some commonly used punctuations have been discussed in this chapter. It is hoped that the discussion of punctuation marks will assist the students to handle the task of writing with ease. If all the mechanics involved in writing are taken care of, then reading will be clearer and comprehensible overall, thus, becoming familiar with the basic punctuation marks in the English language will allow us to convey the precise meaning in our writing.

Correct the following passage using appropriate punctuations.

### TOP LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES FOR BUILDING HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS

Phil Harkins 2008

From extensive research we conclude that extraordinary leaders employ distinctive forms of verbal communication. It is what these leaders say and what they don't say that gives them an advantage in getting teams to high performance levels. These leaders truly mean what they say; they don't mix their messages, fudge meanings, or use ambiguous words. Their conversations are always candid, clear, and followed by committed action. We call them 'powerful conversations' because they make blueprints come alive and create positive attitudes.



and energy on the part of team members they also encourage mutual understanding between team members and the leader use language to make a vision seem real and worth attaining What follows is a less detailed but fuller list of what leaders should do to get people to work together to attain organizational goals

1. Define a very clear picture of the future a vision for the team This is crucial because teams search desperately for specific targets consider the old expression If you don't know where you are going any road will get you there Journeys without a clear destination leave groups feeling flat and lost Keeping teams informed on where they're headed and how best to get there means leaders must be prepared to acknowledge and adapt to changes in operational conditions and even objectives leaders cannot sit back and watch but instead must create and recreate the vision and team spirit that stops people losing heart and becoming lost
2. Be genuine, even if it means lowering your guard Leaders who create click have an uncanny sense about how and when to express their inner selves They will even reveal their own vulnerabilities at the right time to gain the respect of those around them they are not so concerned about projecting a perfect image they know that high-impact leaders get results by laughing at their own flaws They don't play make believe knowing it's more important to be than to seem to be
3. Ask good questions they use enquiry and advocacy in such a way as to keep them abreast of what is really going on. They seem to use a simple formula of the 70-20-10 rule in conversations 70 per cent listening 20 per cent enquiring with just the right amount of advocacy, and 10 per cent tracking ie summarizing and synthesizing information and providing possible courses of action

#### Answer to the Exercise

#### TOP LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES FOR BUILDING HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS Phil Harkins, 2008

From extensive research, we conclude that extraordinary leaders employ distinctive forms of verbal communication. It is what these leaders say and what they don't say that gives them an advantage in getting teams to high-performance levels. These leaders truly mean what they say. They don't mix their messages, fudge meanings or use ambiguous words. Their conversations are always candid, clear, and followed by committed action.

We call them 'powerful conversations', because they make blueprints come alive and create positive attitudes and energy on the part of team members. They also encourage mutual understanding between team members and the leader; use language to make a vision seem real and worth attaining. ...What follows is a less detailed but fuller list of what leaders should do to get people to work together to attain organizational goals.

1. Define a very clear picture of the future - a vision for the team. This is crucial, because teams search desperately for specific targets. Consider the old expression: "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." Journeys without a clear destination leave groups feeling flat and lost. Keeping teams informed on where they're headed and how best to get there means leaders must be prepared to acknowledge and adapt to changes in operational conditions and even objectives. Leaders cannot sit back

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3. Ask good questions. They use enquiry and advocacy in such a way as to keep them abreast of what is really going on. They seem to use a simple formula of the 70-20-10 rule in conversations: 70 per cent listening, 20 per cent enquiring with just the right amount of advocacy, and 10 per cent tracking (i.e., summarizing and synthesizing information, and providing possible courses of action).

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