

PUNCTUATION

COMMAS, SEMICOLONS, COLONS, DASHES, PARENTHESES

- Sentences with two main clauses:
 - The bus stopped, but no one got off. (See p. 455.)
 - The bus stopped; no one got off. (See p. 478.)
 - The bus stopped; however, no one got off. (See p. 480.)
 - The mechanic replaced the battery, the distributor cap, and the starter; but still the car would not start. (See p. 482.)
 - Her duty was clear; she had to locate the problem. (See p. 503.)
- Sentences with introductory elements (Modifiers, see p. 457.):
 - After the argument was over, we laughed at ourselves.
 - Suddenly, the door flew open.
- (Absolute phrases, see p. 464.):
 - It's wing broken, the bird hopped around on the ground.

COMMAS, SEMICOLONS, COLONS, DASHES, PARENTHESES (continued)

- Interrupting and concluding elements:
 - Nonessential elements (See p. 459.):
 - ◆ Jim's car, which barely runs, has been impounded.
 - Nonessential appositives:
 - ◆ Bergen's only daughter, Candice, became an actress. (See p. 461.)
 - ◆ The residents of three counties—Suffolk, Springfield, and Morrison —were urged to evacuate. (See p. 506.)
 - ◆ Father demanded one promise: that we not lie to him. (See p. 504.)
 - Essential elements (See p. 461.):
 - ◆ The car, that hit mine, was uninsured
 - ◆ We consulted a teacher, who had promised to help us.

COMMAS, SEMICOLONS, COLONS, DASHES, PARENTHESES (continued)

- Interrupting and concluding elements (continued):
 - Essential appositives (See p. 461.)
 - ◆ Shaw's play, *Saint Joan*, was performed last year.
 - Transitional or parenthetical expressions
 - ◆ We suspect, however, that he will not come. (See p. 461.)
 - Absolute phrases (See p. 464.)
 - ◆ The bird, its wing broken, hopped about on the ground.
 - Phrases expressing contrast (See p. 464.)
 - ◆ The humidity, not just the heat, gives me headaches.
 - Concluding summaries and explanations
 - ◆ We dined on gumbo and jambalaya—a Cajun feast. (See p. 507.)

COMMAS, SEMICOLONS, COLONS, DASHES, PARENTHESES (continued)

- Items in a series
 - Three or more items
 - ◆ Chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans, and gibbons are all apes.
 - Two or more adjectives before a noun (See p. 465.)
 - ◆ Dingy, smelly clothes decorated their room.
 - Introductory series (See p. 507.)
 - ◆ Appropriateness, accuracy, and necessity — these criteria should govern your selection of words.
 - Concluding series
 - ◆ Every word should be appropriate, accurate, and necessary. (See p. 474.)

EXERCISE

End Punctuation

Select choice that correctly punctuates the sentence.

1. Asked what word came to mind when he thought of the Internet, one third-world subscriber responded, "Colonialism"
a. "Colonialism"! b. "Coloni alism!" c. "C olonialism?"
2. Why would the Internet, a collection of more than 10 million computers that move data among almost 200 nations, be considered a form of colonialism
a. colonialism. b. colonialism! c. colonialism?
3. The answer, according to some critics of the system, is that the Internet exports the English language (carrying with it immense cultural power)
a. language. b. power.) c. power).
4. Complaining that it is easier to download English translations of Russian classics than Russian versions, Anatoly Voronov asks, "Why shouldn't Pushkin or Lermontov be more available in Russian"
a. Russian? b. Russian? c. Russian? "
5. Voronov argues that the need to use English over the Internet, divides the world into new sorts of "haves and have-nots"
a. have-nots? b. have-nots? c. have-nots? "
6. But isn't Christian Huitema, a member of the board of the Internet Society, correct when he says, "The effect of the Internet is to make information available at a minimum cost and effort"
a. effort? b. effort? c. effort? "

Exercise taken from Longman Resources for Instructors: Diagnostic and Editing Tests to accompany Longman 2004 English Handbooks, 6e

ANSWERS TO EXERCISE

1. B “Colonialism!”
2. C Colonialism?
3. C power).
4. A Russian?”
5. B have-nots.”
6. B effort”?

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PRINCIPAL USES OF THE COMMA

- To separate main clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction
- To set off most introductory elements
- To set off nonessential elements
- To separate items in a series
- To separate coordinate adjectives

- Other uses
 - To set off absolute phrases
 - To set off phrases expressing contrast
 - To separate parts of dates, addresses, long numbers
 - To separate quotations and signal phrases
 - To prevent misreading

A TEST FOR ESSENTIAL AND NONESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- Identify the element.
 - Hal Nguyen who emigrated from Vietnam lives in Denver.
 - Those who emigrated with him live elsewhere.
- Remove the element. Does the fundamental meaning of the sentence change?
 - Hal Nguyen lives in Denver. *No*
 - Those live elsewhere. *Yes* (Who are *Those*?)
- If *no*, the element is *nonessential* and should be set off with punctuation.
 - Hal Nguyen, who emigrated from Vietnam, lives in Denver.
 - If *yes*, the element is *essential* and should *not* be set off with punctuation.
 - ◆ Those who emigrated with him live elsewhere.

PUNCTUATING TWO OR MORE ADJECTIVES

- Identify the adjectives.
 - She was a faithful sincere friend.
- Can the adjectives be reversed without changing meaning?
 - She was a sincere faithful friend. *Yes*
 - They are medical dedicated students. *No*
- Can the word *and* be inserted between the adjectives without changing meaning?
 - She was a faithful and sincere friend. *Yes*
 - They are dedicated and medical students. *No*
- If *yes* to both questions, the adjectives are coordinate and *should* be separated by a comma. If *no*, the adjectives are not coordinate and should *not* be separated by a comma.
 - She was a faithful, sincere friend.
 - They are dedicated medical students. _____

PRINCIPAL MISUSES OF THE COMMA

- Don't use a comma after a subject or verb.
- Don't separate a pair of words, phrases, or subordinate clauses joined by *and*, *or*, or *nor*.
- Don't use a comma after *and*, *but*, *although*, *because*, or another conjunction.
- Don't set off essential elements.
- Don't set off a series.
- Don't set off an indirect quotation or a single word that is an essential appositive.

EXERCISE

Revising: Needless or misused commas

Revise the following sentences to eliminate needless or misused commas. Circle the number preceding each sentence that is already punctuated correctly.

1. Nearly 32 million US residents, speak a first language other than English.
2. After English the languages most commonly spoken in the United States are, Spanish, French, and German.
3. Almost 75 percent of the people, who speak foreign languages, used the words, “good” or “very good,” when judging their proficiency in English.
4. Recent immigrants, especially those speaking Spanish, Chinese, and Korean, tended to judge their English more harshly.
5. The states with the highest proportion of foreign language speakers, are New Mexico, and California.

ANSWERS TO EXERCISE

1. Nearly 32 million US residents speak a first language other than English.
2. After English the languages most commonly spoken in the United States are Spanish, French, and German.
3. Almost 75 percent of the people who speak foreign languages used the words “good” or “very good” when judging their proficiency in English.
4. Sentence correct.
5. The states with the highest proportion of foreign-language speakers are New Mexico and California.

DISTINGUISHING THE COMMA, THE SEMICOLON, AND THE COLON.

- The **comma** chiefly separates both equal and unequal sentence elements.
- The **semicolon** chiefly separates equal and balanced sentence elements. Often the first clause creates an expectation, and the second clause fulfills the expectation.
- The **colon** chiefly separates unequal sentence elements.

USES AND MISUSES OF THE APOSTROPHE

- Use an apostrophe to form the possessives of nouns and indefinite pronouns.
 - Use an apostrophe to form contractions.
 - The apostrophe is optional for plurals of abbreviations, dates, and words or characters named as words.
-
- Do not use an apostrophe plus *-s* to form the possessives of plural nouns ending in *-s*.
 - Do not use an apostrophe to form plurals of nouns.
 - Do not use an apostrophe with verbs ending in *-s*.
 - Do not use an apostrophe to form the possessives of personal pronouns.

EXERCISE

Distinguishing between plurals and possessives

Supply the appropriate form—possessive or plural—of each word given in brackets.

1. Demeter may be the oldest of the Greek [god], older than Zeus.
2. Many prehistoric [culture] had earth [goddess] like Demeter.
3. In myth she is the earth mother, which means that the responsibility for the fertility of both [animal] and [plant] is [she].
4. The [goddess] festival came at harvest time, with [it] celebration of bounty.
5. The [people] [prayer] to Demeter thanked her for grain and other [gift].

ANSWERS TO EXERCISE

1. Demeter may be the oldest of the Greek gods, older than Zeus.
2. Many prehistoric cultures had earth goddesses like Demeter.
3. In myth she is the earth mother, which means that the responsibility for the fertility of both animals and plants is hers.
4. The goddess's festival came at harvest time, with its celebration of bounty.
5. The people's prayers to Demeter thanked her for grain and other gifts.

HANDLING QUOTATIONS FROM SPEECH OR WRITING

● Direct and indirect quotation

➤ Direct quotation (See p. 496.)

- ◆ According to Lewis Thomas, “We are, perhaps uniquely among the earth’s creatures, the worrying animal. We worry away our lives.

➤ Quotation within quotation (See p. 497.)

- ◆ Quoting a phrase by Lewis Thomas, the author adds, “We are ‘the worrying animal.’”

➤ Indirect quotation (See p. 497.)

- ◆ Lewis Thomas says that human beings are unique among animals in their worrying.

● Quotation marks with other punctuation marks:

➤ Commas and periods (See p. 500.)

- ◆ Human beings are the “worrying animal,” says Thomas.

➤ Semicolons and colons (See p. 501.)

- ◆ Machiavelli says that “the majority of men live content”; in contrast, Thomas calls us “the worrying animal.”

HANDLING QUOTATIONS FROM SPEECH OR WRITING (continued)

- Question marks, exclamation points, dashes
(See p. 501.)
 - ◆ *Part of own sentence:* Who said that human beings are “the worrying animal”?
 - ◆ *Part of the original quotation:* “Will you discuss this with me?” she asked
- Altering quotations:
 - Brackets for additions (See p. 510.)
 - ◆ “We [human beings] worry away our lives,” says Thomas.
 - Brackets for altered capitalization (See p. 519.)
 - ◆ “[T]he worrying animal” is what Thomas calls us. He says that “[w]e worry away our lives.”
 - Ellipsis marks for omissions (See p. 511.)
 - ◆ “We are . . . the worry animal.” says Thomas.

HANDLING QUOTATIONS FROM SPEECH OR WRITING (continued)

- Punctuating signal phrases with quotations:
 - Introductory signal phrase (See p. 468.)
 - ◆ Thomas says that the “worrying animal” is afraid and restless.
- Concluding signal phrase:
 - ◆ We are “the worrying animal,” says Thomas.
- Interrupting signal phrase:
 - ◆ “I do not like the idea,” she said; “however, I agree with it.”

TITLES TO BE ENCLOSED IN QUOTATION MARKS

- Songs
 - “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds”
- Short poems
 - “Sunday Morning”
- Articles in periodicals
 - “Comedy and Tragedy Transposed”
- Short stories
 - “The Battler”
- Essays
 - “Politics and the English Language”
- Episodes of television and radio programs
 - “The Mexican Connection” (on 60 Minutes)
- Subdivisions of books
 - “Voyage to the Houyhnhnms” (Part IV of Gulliver’s Travels)

EXERCISE

Revising: quotation marks

Remove underlining and insert quotation marks where appropriate.

1. In the title essay of her book The Death of the Moth and Other Essays, Virginia Woolf describes the last moments of a frail and diminutive body.
2. An insect's death may seem insignificant, but the moth is, in Woolf's words, life, a pure bead.
3. The moth's struggle against death, indifferent, impersonal, is heroic.
4. Where else but in such a bit of life could one see a protest so superb?
5. At the end Woolf sees the moth lying most decently and uncomplainingly composed; in death it finds dignity.

ANSWERS TO EXERCISE

1. In the title essay of her book “The Death of the Moth” and Other Essays, Virginia Woolf describes the last moments of a “frail and diminutive body.” [Underlining correct for book title, but essay title within it is quoted.]
2. An insect’s death may seem insignificant, but the moth is, in Woolf’s words, “life, a pure bead.”
3. The moth’s struggle against death, “indifferent, impersonal,” is heroic.
4. Where else but in such a bit of life could one see a protest so “superb”?
5. At the end Woolf sees the moth lying “most decently and uncomplainingly composed”; in death it finds dignity.

DISTINGUISHING THE COLON AND THE SEMICOLON

- The **colon** is a mark of introduction that separates elements of unequal importance, such as statements and explanations or introductions and quotations. (See p. 503.)
 - The business school caters to working students: it offers special evening courses in business writing, finance, and management.
- The **semicolon** separates elements of equal importance, almost always complete main clauses. (See p. 477.)
 - Few enrolling students know exactly what they want from the school; most hope generally for a managerial career.

DISTINGUISHING DASHES, COMMAS, AND PARENTHESES

- **Dashes** give the information the greatest emphasis: (See p. 506.)
 - Many students—including some employed by the college —disapprove of the new work rules.
- **Commas** are less emphatic: (See p. 459.)
 - Many students, including some employed by the college, disapprove of the new work rules.
- **Parentheses** are the least emphatic:(See p. 508.)
 - Many students (including some employed by the college) disapprove of the new work rules.

EXERCISE

Other Punctuation Marks

Choose the letter that correctly punctuates the sentence.

- When Percival Lowell an early 20th century American astronomer observed Mars through a telescope, he thought he saw a vast network of canals.
 - [an early 20th century American astronomer]
 - (an early 20th century American astronomer)
 - an early 20th century American astronomer—
- He hypothesized that Mars had the following features in common with Earth water, vegetation, and at some time in the past, intelligent life.
 - Earth; water
 - EarthÑwa ter
 - Earth: water
- The report cited earlier missions only indirectly: ÓHowever, three space probes in the 1960Ñ the Mariner missions revealed that Mars had no canals, vegetation, or water.Ó
 - [the Mariner missions]
 - (the Mariner missions)
 - /the Mariner missions/
- With its distant orbit 140 million miles from the sun and its thin, largely carbon-dioxide atmosphere, Mars has a harsh environment.
 - No change
 - (140 million miles from the sun)
 - É140 million miles from the sunÉ
- The Mariner and later the Viking missions did find evidence that Mars has had a complicated climatic history one punctuated with warm periods.
 - historyÑone punctuated with warm periods.
 - history: one punctuated with warm periods.
 - historyÉone
- Furthermore, researchers have found the other evidence characteristic of glacial landscapes, such as boulder-like ridges of sediment, meandering lines of sand and or gravel, and Órock glaciers,Ólike those found in Alaska.
 - andÑo r
 - and/or
 - and, or

ANSWERS TO EXERCISE

1. B (an early 20th century American astronomer)
2. C Earth: water
3. A [the Mariner missions]
4. B (140 million miles from the sun)
5. A history—one punctuated with warm periods
6. B and/or