

# CASE Lecture 7: Punctuation

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## Session Aims

- To highlight the importance of punctuation in maximising clarity of expression.
- To review the main punctuation marks and discuss their appropriateness in academic writing.
- Focus on colons and semicolons.
- Focus on commas.
- Focus on apostrophes.

University of Sussex: Guide to Punctuation

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/informatics/punctuation/toc>

## Punctuation changes meaning

A woman without her man is nothing

A woman, without her man, is nothing.

A woman: without her, man is nothing.

My wife, who is a teacher, has just been promoted.

My wife who is a teacher has just been promoted.

## Introductory quiz

1. The black African and Caribbean are the largest minority ethnic groups, with distribution as follows; black African (16.1%) and Caribbean (8%).
2. Although, learning from experience is a natural process, development is limited if teachers only learn from their experience.
3. However a teacher can learn through interactions with other professionals (e.g. feedback, teamwork, mentoring).
4. The cardiovascular response to hypoxia is lower in old people than in young people, these findings reflect those found in previous studies.
5. My students who I like passed the exam.
6. The French are good at cooking: the English are good at eating.
7. She looked for her keys, and finding them, drove off.
8. The pupil's entrance is opposite the gym, but its shut today.
9. The patient asked what the treatment options were?
10. The research wasn't sufficiently thorough to be counted as valid.

## Punctuation marks

List all the ones you can think of.

What function do they serve?

Are they appropriate for use in academic writing?

. , ? !

; separate two main clauses (no coordinator)

: explain/define info on preceding clause; indented quotation

John's

(1913)

half-baked

Tuesday/Friday

I saw Jim – he looked great.

I visited all the main cities: Paris, London, Athens... .

I visited all the main cities: Paris, London, Athens, etc. .

## Colons

- Easy to use!
  - Always occur on their own; never with hyphen or dash.
1. To indicate that what follows it is a definition or explanation of what precedes it. This can often be a shift from a general to a specific statement:
    - There is only one solution: re-nationalise the railways.
    - I propose a new approach: all inclusive management.
    - \*\*I propose: a new all inclusive management approach.
  2. To introduce a list. The clause before the colon should be finite:
    - We visited all the main cities: Rome, Paris, London.
    - \*\* The three most important things a teachers needs to have are: patience, commitment and knowledge.
  3. To introduce some material 'set off in the page:
    - Indented quotation
    - Bullet points

## Semi-colons

1. To join two sentences and highlight the relationships between them, when:

- The two sentences are 'too close' to separate with a full stop.
- There is no (FANBOYS) connecting word.
- Both sentences are complete sentences.

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.

2. To join two sentences with a linking adverb:

- Some people disagree with the theory; however, it has never been proven wrong.

*Linking adverbs: additionally, besides, consequently, conversely, furthermore, equally, however, nevertheless, thus, likewise, namely, nonetheless, otherwise, subsequently*

3. To separate items in a list in which commas already occur:

- I have lived in Chicago, Illinois; Kansas City, Missouri; and Omaha, Nebraska.

## Comma splice

Commas should not be used to separate grammatically complete sentences. Too many commas probably means you need to have more sentences.

How could you correct the following sentence?

The rain came down heavily, I was soon wet through.

1. The rain came down heavily, and I was soon wet through.  
(FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
1. The rain coming down heavily, I was soon wet through.
2. The rain came down heavily, which meant I was soon wet through.
3. The rain came down heavily; I was soon wet through.



## The 'listing' comma

Used in the place of 'and'.

- The three Musketeers were Athos, Porthos and Aramis.
- Lisa speaks French, Juliet speaks Italian and I speak Spanish.

Correct the following:

\*Lisa speaks French, Juliet speaks Italian.

\*She gave me an antique, ivory box.

\*My favourite opera composers are Verdi, Puccini, Mozart and Gilbert and Sullivan.

Examples taken from University of Sussex Guide to Punctuation:  
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/informatics/punctuation/>

## The 'joining' comma

- Norway has applied to join the EC, and Sweden is expected to do the same.
- You must hand in your essay by Friday, or you will receive a mark of zero.
- Britain has long been isolated in Europe, but now she is beginning to find allies.

\*Bangladesh is one of the world's poorest countries, its annual income is only \$80 per person.

\*Two members of the expedition were too ill to continue, nevertheless the others decided to press on.

Examples taken from University of Sussex Guide to Punctuation:

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## The 'bracketing' comma

- Mark off an extra piece of information in a sentence.
  - This information does not disturb the flow of the sentence
1. These findings, we would suggest, cast doubt upon his hypothesis.
  2. Schliemann, of course, did his digging before modern archaeology was invented.
  3. Darwin's Origin of Species, published in 1859, revolutionized biological thinking.
  4. Rupert Brooke, who was killed in the war at the age of 28, was one of our finest poets.

Examples taken from University of Sussex Guide to Punctuation:  
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\*London is a vibrant, and at times hectic city.

## Commas: practice

What's the difference in meaning?

- Two managers, Mr Jones and Mrs Blair, spoke at the meeting.
- Two managers, Mr Jones, and Mrs Blair spoke at the meeting.

Correct the following:

1. I prefer Australian, red wines to all others.
2. Bronte's first novel, *Jane Eyre*, was swiftly followed by her second *Villette*.
3. She looked for her keys, and finding them, quickly drove off.
4. Kate James who is now a judge went to a comprehensive school.
5. Two members of the expedition were too ill to continue, nevertheless the others decided to press on. (nevertheless, consequently, hence, thus, however)
6. \*Just before unloading the trucks were fired upon.

*\*University of Sussex: Guide to Punctuation*

# Apostrophes

1. Pupil's entrance. (school sign)
2. Bobs' Motors.
3. Mens Toilets
4. Cyclist's only.
5. Recruitment at it's best.
6. Dr Jones's research.
7. Socrates' philosophy
8. Pica's, Long's and Krashen's research.
9. Most information giving websites include an FAQ's section.
10. Two week's work.

## And finally

A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots in the air.

“Why?” asked the confused waiter, as the panda makes for the exit.

The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder.

“I’m a panda,” he says, at the door. “Look it up.”

The waiter turns to the relevant entry and, sure enough, finds an explanation.

“Panda: Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China.

Eats, shoots and leaves.”