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Item Of Grammar Or Punctuation

Its Purpose & Functional Use For Writers

Punctuation: Is used to ensure a text's meaning is clear and to make it easier to read by signalling boundaries, omissions and grammatical functions.

Capital Letters and Full Stops

For a sentence to make sense to a reader it needs to be complete and given 'boundaries'. Capital letters and full stops mark the boundaries and separate one sentence from the next.

Exclamation Mark

Exclamation marks are placed at the end of a sentence. Their function is to allow the writer to express a strong positive or negative feeling, such as surprise, delight, shock, horror, amusement and excitement. They are often used in advertisements in order to attract the reader's attention. Writers can also use an exclamation mark to ask an exclamatory 'question', which does not require a reply: *'Well, isn't that sad!'*

Question Marks

Questions are often asked by characters in stories if they are seeking the truth, need information, wish to offer a choice to another character or even convey a threat: *Who are you looking at?* Question marks signal that a question is being asked, and are placed at the end of a sentence. Questions sometimes appear in factual writing as a way of involving the reader in the subject. *Have you ever wanted to build your own car? Follow this guide and you'll be hitting the road in no time.*

Commas
(Unlike full stops, commas do not signal finality).

Commas are used in lists. The reason for this is to dispense with repetition of 'and', thereby saving both reader and writer time and avoiding tedium. Commas are sometimes used to separate a subordinate clause from a main clause. (For clauses, see below.) Their function here is to give an extra focus:
The girl, who was playing in the park, was bitten by a dog has a different focus to *The girl who was playing in the park was bitten by a dog.*



<p>Speech Marks Quotation Marks <i>(Inverted Commas)</i></p>	<p>Speech marks allow the reader to identify all the people speaking in a text. They enclose the words spoken. Double marks are usually used to contain speech, but some printed texts use the single mark. Speech can come at the beginning, middle or end of a sentence. Speech marks can be used to show a reader you are quoting someone else's exact words. This is usually seen in newspaper reports, adverts and persuasive or discussion essays.</p>
<p>Apostrophes <i>(Possession)</i></p>	<p>The genitive 's / s' can be used to show possession. This is important because it lets the reader know who owns what. An apostrophe following an s lets the reader know you are writing about a group. Owning a feeling 'Alex's love for pizza' Owning an object or an attribute: <i>the girl's courage; the fans' passion</i> It can also be used to express a measurement 'A week's pocket money', or 'A pound's worth of sweets.' <i>yours, his, hers, ours, theirs</i> and <i>its</i> do not follow this rule but still indicate possession.</p>
<p>Apostrophes <i>(Omission)</i></p>	<p>We can contract (shorten) some verbs. The apostrophe replaces the omitted letters: (e.g. <i>can't, I'm, she'll, it's</i>). Contractions make your writing more informal, and reflect how we usually speak.</p>
<p>Parenthesis <i>(Also see brackets and dashes)</i></p>	<p>A parenthesis is a word/phrase inserted into a sentence to make a comment on or give more information to your reader about something you have just written. It is enclosed in brackets or dashes. <i>She was (incredible though it seems) not afraid of the tiger.</i> <i>The room (a tiny space at the best of times) was now full of photographers.</i> <i>My dad - who has been a printer for years - will retire this year.</i></p>
<p>Colon</p>	<p>A colon tells your reader that an example or explanation is about to be given: <i>It is dull here, even at night: nothing to do, nowhere to go.</i> (Many children's writers often use a dash instead of a colon). Colons are also used to separate the name of the character from their dialogue in a playscript.</p>
<p>Semi-Colon</p>	<p>A semi-colon separates two or more main clauses in a compound sentence so that the writer can avoid using 'and', or avoid writing two or more shorter sentences: <i>There were white gulls circling the cliffs; their calls came faint to our ears.</i> It may be helpful to think of a semi-colon as replacing the word <i>and</i>.</p>
<p>Hyphens</p>	<p>Hyphens are sometimes used to show your reader that you are combining two or more words to mean one word: <i>I live in a house-share.</i> <i>I used 4 digit numbers vs I used 4-digit-numbers.</i> <i>Are you a short story writer? Or a short-story writer?</i> Without a hyphen for some words, your reader can get confused about what you mean.</p>



<p>Dashes (See also 'Brackets' and 'Commas').</p>	<p>Dashes can be used as an informal version of commas for subordination. They can make your reader feel the writing has a relaxed tone <i>Everything was very cheap - in fact nothing cost more than twenty francs.</i> They can help a writer express irony: <i>The dog- whose name was Butch - was terrified of cats.</i> Dashes can also be used in note-taking.</p>
<p>Bullet Points</p>	<p>Bullet points are very useful in lists or possibly in the stages of an instructional text, although a numbered list is probably more useful for instructions.</p>
<p>Ellipsis</p>	<p>Ellipsis is the term for three dots (...), used by writers to show that something is not finished, that something has been omitted, or to generate a feeling of suspense.</p>
<p>Grammar: Enables us, not only to express our meaning fully and clearly, but also denies people the chance of trying to 'misunderstand' the meaning we ourselves alone wish to express. - <i>Paraphrased from William Cobbett.</i></p>	
<p>Articles</p>	<p>The purpose of using <i>a/an</i> is to let your reader know you are talking about something which you have not mentioned before. 'An' is used if the following noun begins with a vowel. This reflects the flow of speech and carries no other function. 'The' refers to something specific.</p>
<p>Nouns</p>	<p>Nouns give a name to things, which may be concrete, abstract (<i>happiness, fear</i>), or related to actions (<i>the flight, a walk, a run</i>). Because their function is to refer, they enable a reader to focus on the subject-matter of a text. Proper nouns are important if you wish to refer to people, places or organisations by their particular name. They begin with capital letters to mark them as very specific. You will use a concrete noun to introduce something to the reader but in subsequent sentences you will probably be replacing that noun with a pronoun. Beware though, your reader may lose track of what your pronoun is referring to and therefore you may at times need to repeat the noun.</p>
<p>Pronouns (For relative pronouns also see relative clauses)</p>	<p>Pronouns of all kinds are used by writers to replace a noun and so avoid repetition. Personal (<i>I, me, you, it, he, him, she, her, we, us, they and them</i>). Possessive (<i>mine, yours, his, her, ours, theirs, its</i> - e.g. <i>The dog has gone into its kennel</i>) NB: For readers' interest only: if used before nouns these 'pronouns' (<i>my, your, his, her, its, our, your, their</i>) function as adjectives. <i>Are you coming to my party?</i> Relative pronouns (<i>who, whom, whose, which, that</i>) heading a subordinate clause function as a means to tell a reader more about a noun. In this sense these subordinate clauses can work as adjectives. (See also relative clauses). <i>The linguist, who thought pronouns were too hard to explain, gave up trying.</i></p>



Determiners	<p>Writers use determiners with a noun so that you can let your reader know you are writing about something specific. There are several types but they all function to express definiteness:</p> <p>The article 'the' is a type of determiner. Demonstratives point out which one/ones you are writing about (this/that/these/those). Possessives tell the reader who owns what (my/your/his/her/its/our/their). Quantifiers and numbers (some, any, no, many, much, few, little, both, all, either, neither, each, every, enough, three, fifty etc...).</p>
Adjectives <i>(See also relative clauses and possessive pronouns)</i>	<p>Adjectives give more information about a noun. Writers use adjectives:</p> <p>To provide vivid description in story-writing, To provide tempting description in advertising, To provide technical description in information texts and instruction.</p> <p>NB: However, linguists would say that adjectives can resemble nouns, verbs or adverbs. (adjective) This is a <i>country</i> road. (noun) The road is in the <i>country</i>. (adjective) That is an <i>intriguing</i> question. (verb) That question <i>intrigues</i> me. (adjective) I caught an <i>early</i> train (adverb) The train arrived <i>early</i>.</p>
Verbs <i>(See modal verbs under 'Tense' and also adjectives).</i>	<p>Verbs are vital. They explain to a reader what is happening or how someone is being or feeling. Your choice of a verb will have a significant effect on your written text. Often more so than adverbs.</p>
Subjunctive Mood	<p>Adds an element of hypothetical wishful thinking or speculation to an action or feeling in your writing. <i>If I were queen I'd chop your head off!</i> or <i>If I were you, I would forget all about the subjunctive mood.</i> The subjunctive is rarely used nowadays in English.</p>
Adverbs	<p>Writers often use adverbs to intensify a verb, to give it more meaning. This is particularly the case in story writing and advertising.</p> <p>There are a number of different types of adverb and they all do different things for writing. They tell us:</p> <p>Where (place) I live <i>in</i> London. I'm going <i>up</i> the road. When (time) I am <i>already</i> there. I arrived home <i>yesterday</i> How (manner) I slammed the door <i>loudly</i>. How often (frequency) I <i>rarely</i> read about grammar Degree (the extent to which something is done). I <i>completely</i> agree. I <i>almost</i> forgot.</p> <p>NB: Adverbs can affect the meaning not only of verbs but also of adjectives. You would often use this in a persuasive text. <i>Deliciously</i> crunchy. <i>Wonderfully</i> healthy. An <i>exceptionally</i> good read. It was <i>incredibly</i> sad.</p>



<p>Fronted Adverbials</p>	<p>If we want our reader to give special attention to an adverb, we can place it at the beginning of a sentence. It sets the reader up for the rest of the sentence, and is often used in instructional texts to let the reader know how the action needs to be done.</p> <p><i>Lightly</i> beat the eggs. <i>Later on</i>, you'll find grammar easier to understand.</p> <p>Using a fronted adverbial is a stylistic choice in writing. Its function is therefore primarily related to meaning, purpose and audience.</p>
<p>Coordinating Conjunctions <i>(and, or, but, so)</i> <i>(Compound Sentences)</i></p> <p>Subordinating Conjunctions <i>(when, before, after, since, until, if, because, although)</i> <i>(See 'Complex Sentences')</i></p>	<p>Writers bring together two units or clauses of a sentence using conjunctions because they want the reader to know that the clauses are related. This may help the writing to flow more than if the writer wrote two separate simple sentences.</p> <p>Coordinating conjunctions go between two equally important clauses, and: Express a reason, (<i>I'm going to the party so I can look like I'm being sociable</i>) Contrast something, (<i>The main course was delicious but the pudding was terrible.</i>) Give a condition (like a promise or a threat), (<i>You'd better leave or I'm going to call the police!</i>) Give an alternative, (<i>Do you want to go now or shall we wait a bit longer?</i>) Give an additional point, (<i>The suspect wore glasses and he walked with a limp.</i>)</p> <p>Using subordinating conjunctions allows you to then go on to write a subordinate clause. NB: A comma is only needed if you start your sentence with a subordinate conjunction and therefore a subordinate clause. Otherwise, no comma is required.</p> <p>I will stay in school <i>until</i> all these books are marked. <i>Although</i> the day began well, it ended in disaster.</p>
<p>Prepositional Phrases <i>(Prepositions)</i></p>	<p>Prepositional phrases allow writers to describe more about the location, direction, time or means of an event. The first word of a prepositional phrase is a preposition.</p> <p>Time: <i>I went to the park <u>after</u> lunch.</i> Location: <i>The mouse ran <u>under</u> the bed.</i> Direction: <i>We walked <u>towards</u> the North star.</i> Means: <i>Did you come here <u>by</u> car?</i> Preposition standing alone: <i>The car went <u>by</u>.</i></p>



Prefix & Suffix	<p>Prefixes and suffixes are used because they are an economical way of changing the meaning of base-words. This allows you to use base-words in a variety of different contexts.</p> <p>A prefix is a morpheme (the smallest unit of meaning) which is added to the beginning of a base-word and changes the meaning (<i>un/like; im/patient; dis/connect</i>).</p> <p>A suffix is also a morpheme; when added to the end of a base-word it changes the tense (<i>jump/ed</i>), or the word class (<i>teach/er; help/ful</i>).</p>
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Homophones	<p>Words which have the same sound but a different meaning and spelling (<i>bear/bare, for/four, wood/would</i>). The only function is that these different spellings allow your reader to tell which word-meaning you want to express.</p>
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Sentence Level

Clauses & Sentences

<p>Subject, Verb, Object (See also, <i>statement, command & question</i>).</p>	<p>Identifying word classes e.g. (noun, verb, noun) is a very different task to that of presenting 'parsed sentences' which involves grouping elements of a sentence into either a subject, verb or object group. For example:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="background-color: #fce4d6;">Subject</td> <td colspan="2" style="background-color: #e2efda;">Verb</td> <td colspan="2" style="background-color: #e1bee7;">Object</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #fce4d6;">Determiner</td> <td style="background-color: #fce4d6;">Adjective</td> <td style="background-color: #fce4d6;">Noun</td> <td style="background-color: #e2efda;">Verb</td> <td style="background-color: #e2efda;">Verb</td> <td style="background-color: #e1bee7;">Determiner</td> <td style="background-color: #e1bee7;">Noun</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #fce4d6;">The</td> <td style="background-color: #fce4d6;">big</td> <td style="background-color: #fce4d6;">horse</td> <td style="background-color: #e2efda;">is</td> <td style="background-color: #e2efda;">jumping</td> <td style="background-color: #e1bee7;">the</td> <td style="background-color: #e1bee7;">fence.</td> </tr> </table> <p>Recognising how individual words are grouped together to produce elements of a sentence is an important advance on simply labelling individual words according to their word-class e.g: (subject- noun - <i>horse</i>, verb - <i>jumping</i>, object - noun - <i>fence</i>).</p> <p>NB: For your interest '<i>the big horse</i>' and '<i>the fence</i>' would be classed as two nominal groups, while '<i>is jumping</i>' is a verbal group.</p> <p>There are functional reasons for knowing how to group words into elements of a sentence. They will be explained below:</p> <p>SV - will help you produce a sentence that is declarative. <i>(S)It (V)'s very big.</i> <i>The (S)car (V)needs fixing.</i></p> <p>VS - will help you produce a sentence that is interrogative. <i>What (V) were (S) you thinking?</i> <i>(V)Will (S)you fix the car?</i></p>	Subject			Verb		Object		Determiner	Adjective	Noun	Verb	Verb	Determiner	Noun	The	big	horse	is	jumping	the	fence.
Subject			Verb		Object																	
Determiner	Adjective	Noun	Verb	Verb	Determiner	Noun																
The	big	horse	is	jumping	the	fence.																



	<p>V - will help you produce a sentence that is imperative. (V)Marry someone else. (V)Fix the car</p>
Declarative clauses (Statements)	<p>Writers write statements to give information to the reader which may or may not be true. <i>I ate the apple.</i></p>
Directive or Imperative clauses (Commands, requests, advice, prohibitions, suggestions, instructions, giving permission, polite wishes.)	<p>A directive is used to tell, urge, persuade or instruct someone to do or not do something. Writers use them in different kinds of text and for different purposes. (See modal verbs). Directives are said to have an imperative structure.</p> <p><i>Stop!</i> <i>Could you close the door? (Also, of course, 'You've left the door open', implying a need for action.)</i> <i>Eat that apple- it will do you good.</i> <i>Do not write on this page.</i> <i>Let's all go down the Strand.</i> <i>Turn left by the post box.</i> <i>Go ahead.</i> <i>Have a nice day.</i></p>
Interrogative clauses (Questions)	<p>Writers often use questions as a way of persuading readers to respond to their writing. They can ask rhetorical questions which don't necessarily require an answer, but which engage readers and make them think or consider their position:</p> <p><i>Is that a good reason for leaving the E.U.?</i></p> <p>A question can also be used to make an 'offer' to someone. <i>Do you want to learn how to make money quickly?</i></p>
Simple Sentences	<p>Simple sentences are made of one clause and so get simple things across to a reader easily and quickly.</p>
Compound Sentences (Conjunctions)	<p>Compound sentences have two or more main clauses, joined by a conjunction. They add to the flow of the writing.</p>
Complex Sentences: Subordinate Clauses (See also Subordinating Conjunctions)	<p>Subordinate clauses are a good way to share with your reader some background information. It's a writer's opportunity to add in extra details which a reader may find interesting. The information given in a subordinate clause is not as important as that given in the main clause.</p> <p><i>After I left the meeting, the chairman resigned.</i></p>
Relative Clause (See pronouns)	<p>Relative clauses are helpful if you wish to write more information about a noun (see 'Pronouns'). They are particularly useful in news reporting, when the writer is writing for effect but as economically as possible.</p> <p><i>The man, who refused to give his name, left the court.</i></p>



Tense and Voice

Past/Present Tense	<p>Choosing a tense is important as it allows the reader to know when the action you are writing about happened. You can change the tense in your writing to let your reader know time has shifted forward or backwards. This is usual in memoirs, including historical memoir (recounts). Shifting between tenses also allows you to compare the past and present, as historians do when debating the past, writing historical recounts and historical biographies (memoir). Some stories are written in the present tense. This is a stylistic choice, but it seems to make the events of the story seem more immediate.</p>
Modal Verbs	<p>Are used by writers to express possibility (can/could/would/should/may/might/ought) or the necessity or desirability of something happening (will/must/shall). This kind of speculation can be about past, present or future events.</p> <p><i>Winston Churchill should have been more bullish with the Russians.</i> <i>We must protect our environment now to save our planet.</i> <i>You shall go to the ball!</i></p>
Passive Voice	<p>Using this voice in your writing allows you to hide the subject from your reader. It means something is done to an object, but we don't know who did it. This can create a sense of mystery for your reader or can make you sound authoritative. These two reasons are why the passive is so often used in newspaper headlines.</p> <p><i>Boris Johnson Attacked At Party</i> <i>The door was smashed in.</i> <i>Diners are asked to pay in full.</i> <i>The car is to be cleaned today.</i></p> <p>The removal of the subject from a sentence is useful in a newspaper headline both in terms of economy of writing and also of the motivation given to the reader to read on.</p>
Perfect Tense	<p>The three perfect tenses in English are the three verb tenses which show action already completed. (The word perfect literally means "made complete" or "completely done.") They are formed by the appropriate tense of the verb to have plus the past participle of the verb:</p> <p>Present perfect: I have seen it. (Present tense of to have plus participle. Action is completed with respect to the present.) Past perfect: I had seen it. (Past tense of to have plus participle. Action is completed with respect to the past.)</p> <p>The perfect tense (have,had,has,plus negative) is particularly useful when writing news reports and historical accounts. Using the present perfect allows you to write about a past action in present time.</p> <p><i>I have seen him on You-tube</i> <i>He has just come from London.</i></p> <p>(N.B. The simple present is used to describe actions said to be in the present.) Using the past perfect allows you to write in the past about something in the further past.</p> <p><i>He hadn't seen his friend for fifty years.</i></p>



Progressive Tense	<p>We use the progressive tense (being,been, isn't, is) to explain to our reader how long an action lasts or that it may still be going on. <i>The car is being cleaned by my friend,</i> NB: Progressive tense verbs are commonly associated with a lexical verb ending with -ing. <i>It's been raining for days</i> <i>It isn't raining anymore.</i></p>
Poetic Devices / Figurative Language	
Alliteration	<p>When most words in a phrase or sentence begin with the same phoneme or cluster of phonemes. Its purpose is to create an effect and probably to amuse: <i>The slithery slimy slug slipped slowly down the slope.</i></p>
Metaphor	<p>When one thing is portrayed as being something else: <i>Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player</i> <i>That struts and frets his time upon the stage.....</i></p> <p>Writers use metaphor to create a strong image in the reader's mind, and to offer the reader a new way of seeing.</p>
Simile	<p>When one thing is explicitly compared with another. <i>I'm easy like a Sunday morning; Her eyes sparkled like diamonds; My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun.</i> As with metaphors, writers use similes to create a vivid image in the reader's mind.</p>
Personification	<p>When a human attribute is given to something non-human: <i>Busie old foole, unruly sun...</i> Writers use personification to add interest, create atmosphere and to make something memorable.</p>
Organisation	
Sub-Headings	<p>They help the reader follow the text by splitting it into chunks and by Indicating what is coming in the writing.</p>
Paragraphing	<p>Each paragraph should contain a new idea, again making it easier for the reader to follow what is being written about.</p>
Cohesion	<p>The way in which the different parts of a text are linked, Pronouns often do this job, making the writing easier to follow by referring back to something previously mentioned. A connective placed at the beginning of a paragraph can make a link with a preceding paragraph.</p>

