

Apostrophe



The **apostrophe** has three main purposes: to replace missing letters, to form contractions, or to show possession.

Use the apostrophe to take the place of a letter or letters omitted from contractions.

has not	hasn't
it is	it's
cannot	can't

Use the apostrophe to take the place of a letter or number that has been omitted.

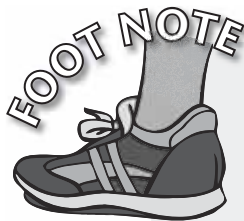
He yelled, "I'm takin' the ball and goin' home."

Do you remember the summer of '99 when we went tubing down the Fraser River?

Use the apostrophe to show possession or ownership.

Singular nouns usually take an apostrophe and s.

my grandmother's house
The student's book



If a singular noun ends with an s or z sound, you may just add an apostrophe or an apostrophe and s. Choose the one that sounds better to your ear.

Thomas' book or **Thomas's** book
In both cases the book belongs to Thomas.

Plural nouns take only an apostrophe if the word ends in **s**.

my grandparents' house
(The house belongs to both my grandparents.)

If a **plural noun** does not end in **s**, add an apostrophe and **s**.

the team's bus (The bus belongs to the team.)

Shared possessives (possession is shared by more than one noun) take an apostrophe and **s** on the last noun only, unless the nouns do not share equally.

Ted and Fred's restaurant
(The restaurant belongs to Ted and Fred.)

Compound noun possessives take an apostrophe on the last word in the compound noun.

my brother-in-law's boat
the high school's gym

Misuses of Apostrophes

Do not use the apostrophe to form plurals.

When you mean more than one, simply add an s.

The **cats** lived in the old barn.

(No apostrophe is needed because there is no ownership.)

There are thirty-eight thousand **teachers** in B.C.

(No apostrophe is needed because there is no ownership.)

Watch out for the most common errors of all.

Do not use **it's** (it is) when you mean **its** (possessive pronoun)

Do not use **who's** (who is) when you mean **whose** (possessive pronoun)

Do not use **you're** (you are) when you mean **your** (possessive pronoun)

It's (it is) a great day to be studying.

The dog wagged **its** tail when the boy came home.

Who's (who is) going to the party?

Whose party is it?

You're a great singer.

Your grammar is improving.

Match the apostrophes with acronyms.

Traditionally, following an acronym with an apostrophe s to pluralize has been considered grammatically incorrect. However, this usage has become so commonplace that most consider this usage now correct.

There are five CD's in the package.

or

There are five CDs in the package.

Capitalization



Capitalize the first word of a sentence and proper nouns—the names of people, places, and things. The following are specific examples.

The first word of a sentence and the personal pronoun “I.”

Do you want me to buy you a sandwich when I stop at the deli?

Capitalize the first word in a direct quotation.

See the tutorial titled “Quotations Marks” for more information.

“Sure, I’ll get you a sandwich,” Cam said. “What kind of bread do you want?”
“Wholewheat, please,” I replied.

When Grant overheard his father say, “Let me take the wheel for a while,” he shuddered.

Capitalize the names of people, their initials, abbreviations, and titles.

Mr. Brown
Nellie McClung

Constable M.R. Davis
Dr. Raymond Wu
Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson

Capitalize titles that indicate family relationships when these titles are used with a name or in place of a name.

Family Titles	General Relationships
Aunt Gertrude	her aunt
Grandfather Stacey	our grandfather
Where is Mother?	my mother went

Capitalize official titles when these titles are used with a name.

Official Titles	General Titles
Mayor Jones	the mayor
Doctor Jack	the doctor

Capitalize regional names (cities, provinces, countries, sections within countries, continents) and abbreviations derived from them.

Kitimat The West Coast Antarctica British Columbia (BC)

Capitalize names of specific bodies of water, rivers, and streams.

Thompson River East Barrier Lake Pacific Ocean

Capitalize common nouns used as part of a place name.

Common	Proper
street	Oak Street
mountain	Rocky Mountains
river	Skeena River
theater	Queen Elizabeth Theatre
school	Rockridge Secondary School

Do not capitalize compass directions, north, south, east, or west, except when they are an area or section of the country or part of a street address.

When jobs were scarce on the **West Side**, the family moved east.
If you walk **north** on **North Street**, you will find the correct address.
I'm lost—do we travel **north** or **west** to reach the hotel?

Capitalize the names of races, languages, nationalities, and the adjectives derived from them.

First Nations Italian cooking Aboriginal education
Japanese Spanish music

Capitalize the name of languages.

Canadians speak **English** and **French**.

Capitalize the names of religions, the adjectives derived from them, the followers of each religion, and their sacred writings.

Muslims	Christians
Koran	Buddhist temple
Bible	Jewish holidays

Capitalize the names of organizations, clubs, historical events and periods of time, and abbreviations derived from them.

Middle Ages	Industrial Revolution	War of 1812
Tim Hortons	United Nations (UN)	Edmonton Oilers

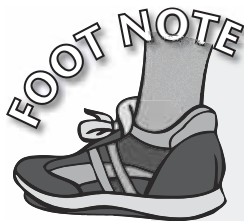
Capitalize the names of months, days of the week, and holidays, but not seasons.

Monday	Thanksgiving Day
December	summer

Capitalize titles.

Capitalize important words in titles of movies, books, magazines, plays, newspapers, poems, TV shows, works of art, pieces of music, and named structures. The first and last word of a title are always capitalized.

<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	<i>TV Guide</i>	<i>The Globe and Mail</i>
<i>The Memorial Arena</i>	<i>Mona Lisa</i>	<i>The Fellowship of the Rings</i>
<i>O Canada</i>		<i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i>



Don't capitalize these small words in titles:
coordinate conjunctions (**or, and, but**, etc.)
articles (**a, an, the**)
short prepositions (**to, of, at, in**, etc.)

Capitalize letter greetings and closings.

Greetings—Capitalize the first letter in all significant words.

To Whom It May Concern:

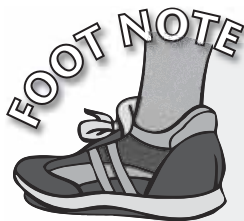
Closings—Capitalize only the first letter of the first word and any proper nouns.

With love,
Dear Mom,
Yours truly,

Capitalize school subjects and languages.

Capitalize the name of a school subject when it is the name of a specific course, but do not capitalize general subject areas.

Specific Course	General Subject
Physics 12	science
Social Studies 11	geography



Any general subject areas that are also proper nouns should be capitalized. For example:

All students take an English class.

Colon



A **colon** is a piece of punctuation that has a number of functions.

Use a colon after the greeting in a business letter.

Dear Sir:

To Whom It May Concern:

Use a colon to separate hours and minutes.

They have recess at 10:15.

The plane departs at 14:10.

Use a colon to express a ratio.

The study revealed that cats outnumbered dogs by 3:1.

Use a colon to separate acts from scenes in a play.

Act III: Scene 2 is my favourite part of the play.

Use a colon to set off dialogue for a play or other script.

Principal: Kajra, why were you late this morning?

Kajra: The power went off, so I slept in.

Use a colon to separate a title from a subtitle.

My new book is called *Hot Stuff: One Hundred Ways to Make Chili*.

More Complex Usage

Colons can be used after a complete sentence or independent clause to draw attention to specific information that follows.

Use a colon to introduce items in a long list if the introductory clause can stand by itself.

I will bring the following: pop, chips, napkins, and plates.

Use a colon to introduce a quotation if the introductory sentence can stand by itself.

Even the experts seem to agree: “One consistent finding is that more than half the teenagers studied wish they had more time for sleep.”

Use a colon to introduce an explanation or definition if the introductory clause can stand by itself.

The second clause may be a sentence fragment.

The dog and cat finally found something in common: enjoying a peaceful sleep in front of a warm fireplace.

The second clause may be a complete sentence.

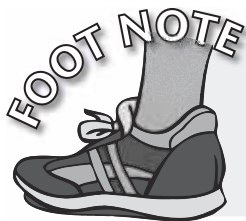
The dog and cat finally found something in common: they both enjoy sleeping in front of a warm fireplace.

Use a colon to introduce contrasting statements.

It was useless to try pleasing him: he criticized everything.

Use a colon to highlight a situation, especially if it seems a bit dramatic.

Running along the cliff, the hiker knew he had only one chance to escape from the charging beast: jump.



Capitalizing the first word after the colon when a complete sentence follows is optional.

Comma



2

A **comma** is a piece of punctuation that has a variety of uses, but its purpose is mainly to keep words and ideas clear.

Use a comma to separate items in dates and places.

July 1, 1908

Prince George, British Columbia

Use a comma in the openings of friendly letters and in the closings of all letters.

Dear Grandmother,

Yours truly,

Use a comma to separate initials from surnames, and to separate titles from surnames.

Mitchell, W.O.

James Brown, B.Sc.

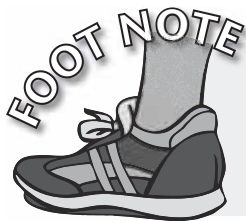
Use a comma between words or groups of words in a series.

My lunch contained sandwiches, an apple, cake, and one raw carrot.

Use a comma to separate adjectives before a noun.

Trilby bought a shiny, new, red, sports car.

They looked out on the choppy, grey sea.



If the word “and” can be inserted between ideas, insert a comma.

Use a comma before a coordinate conjunction in a compound sentence.

Commas are used to separate independent clauses (clauses that can stand by themselves) in a compound sentence.

Independent Clause	Conjunction	Independent Clause
The day felt chilly,	but	we went to the pool.
The dog licked my hand,	and	I knew I had to take her home.

Use a comma to set off introductory words and phrases.

Commas are used to set off introductory words or phrases that cannot stand alone as a sentence.

Introductory Phrase	Independent Clause
If I win the lottery,	I will move to Fiji.
While waiting for the bus,	I fell asleep.

Use a comma to set off words that interrupt the main idea of a sentence.

My boss, for example, donated thousands of dollars to charity last year.
It may not be my place, however, to say this.

Interrupters			
by the way	however	still	incidentally
for example	furthermore	in fact	of course

Use a comma to set off appositives.

An appositive is a word or phrase that adds extra information about the noun that appears before it in a sentence.

Noun	Appositive	
Leo,	my youngest brother,	was born on Canada Day.
The town of Kitchener,	once known as Berlin,	is in Ontario.

Use a comma to set off non-essential words and phrases.

Example: My dog, who is five-years old today, can sit, shake a paw, and roll over on command.

Explanation: The clause “who is five-years old today” is extra information and not essential to understanding the sentence and is, therefore, placed between commas.

Example: My car accident, which happened on Main Avenue and Third Street, involved a cyclist.

Explanation: The clause “which happened on Main Avenue and Third Street” is also not essential to understanding the sentence.

Example: My friend who rides a motorcycle is always trying to get me to ride with him.

Explanation: In this case, the clause “who rides a motorcycle” is essential to understanding the meaning of the sentence; without it, the identity of the friend would be unclear. Therefore, no commas are placed around the phrase.

Example: The book that is on the table is mine.

Explanation: In this sentence “that is on the table” is important because it tells which book is mine. There might be books in other places, but this sentence is concerned with the book on the table.

Use a comma to set off the name of the person addressed (spoken to).

I have finished my lesson, Miss Kim.

Close the door, Marion, when you leave the room.

Use a comma in quotations.

“I told you,” said the coach, “to get to bed early the night before a game.”

Hyphen



Hyphens are used to form compound words or join word groups.

Use a hyphen in some compound words.

I got dizzy just watching the children on the **merry-go-round**.
My **brother-in-law** is a police officer.



Not all compound words need hyphens, so check the dictionary if you're not sure.

Use a hyphen with some prefixes and some suffixes.

He is an **ex-hockey** player.
She was very **non-specific** in her request.

Use a hyphen to link names or other identifiers that belong together.

Lord **Baden-Powell** established the Boy Scouts.
My background is **Chinese-Canadian**.

Use a hyphen in compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.

There are **forty-two** cars in the parking lot.
My grandmother will be **seventy-seven** next week.

Use a hyphen fractions, when written out as words.

Two-thirds of the school voted for me as class president.
We still had **three-quarters** of a tank of gas.

Use a hyphen when two or more words are joined to form a single adjective before the noun.

The **fourteen-year-old** dog was remarkably healthy.
The mayor presented a **common-sense** solution.

Use a hyphen with nouns that follow a single letter.

She wore a **V-neck** sweater to the party.
We went the wrong way, so we had to make a **U-turn**.

Use a hyphen to make long words clearer, especially ones that contain repeated letters.

My doctor gave me an **anti-inflammatory** for my swollen knee.
The rocket is about to **re-enter** the atmosphere.

Use a hyphen to create special effects.

B-b-ut, that's not what I meant!



Parentheses, Dash, and Ellipsis



Parentheses

Parentheses are a form of punctuation to be used around words in a sentence to add or clarify information. Generally anything placed in parentheses is considered to be less important than anything outside of it.

Use parentheses to enclose an interrupting word or word group that adds information, but does not change the meaning of a sentence.

There are two Vancouvers (**in British Columbia and in Washington**) in the area sometimes called "Cascadia."

Our teacher (**a good-looking man in his 40s**) introduced himself.

Use parentheses to clarify an idea.

My favourite teacher, Ms. Chan (**the Ms. Chan who teaches science**), lives down the street from us.

Use parentheses to show equivalent measures or values.

The Weather Network was predicting fifteen centimetres (**six inches**) of snow.



Use parentheses to enclose directions and references.

The comma (**see Lesson 2**) is often misused.

Place punctuation *inside* the parentheses if it belongs to the material in parentheses.

She made a weak excuse (“My dog ate it.”) for not having finished her project.

Place punctuation *outside* the parentheses if it belongs to the main sentence.

I thought the party was tonight (Saturday), not last night.

Dash

A **dash**, more commonly used in informal writing, has several functions.

Use a dash to show a break in thought in a sentence.

The Black Stallion—my all-time favourite book—was for sale at the used bookstore.

Use a dash to set off information that is dramatic.

Locating fresh water would mean we stood a chance—our only chance at surviving until our rescuers could find us.

Use a dash in place of the words like *that is*, *namely*, *in other words*.

I’ve decided to do more outdoor activities—riding my bike, hiking, and roller-blading.



Use a dash to summarize or provide information.

Language arts, social studies, science, and math—all my academic subjects—seem to have homework.

Use a dash to create special effects, interruptions, and sudden stops in speech.

“I – er – uh – can’t remember – where we went,” Ravi cried.

Use a dash to enclose an interrupting word or word group, especially when such a word group contains a comma. When used in this way, a dash is placed at the beginning and the end of the word group.

He quickly picked up his toys—ball, bat, glove, and bike—and hurried home.

Ellipsis

An **ellipsis** is a series of three dots (separated by a space around each dot) that indicate the omission of words or information.

Use ellipsis points of three dots to indicate an omission of a word or words within a sentence.

Small communities such as Granville . . . and Cedar Cottage grew into the city of Vancouver.

Use ellipsis points of four dots (a period followed by three spaced dots) to indicate omission of:

- the remainder of the quoted sentence
- the beginning of the next sentence
- one or more sentences
- one or more paragraphs

Once upon a time



The overuse of the ellipsis, dash, or parentheses can be distracting to a reader. Use these forms of punctuation rarely and with care.

Quotation Marks



Quotation marks are like bookends: they work in pairs. Quotation marks indicate direct quotations, enclose the exact words of a speaker, and are used in a few other special situations.

Use quotation marks to enclose the exact words of the speaker.

Quotation marks show the beginning and end of a speaker's words.

Jasmine said, **"Come for dinner tonight."**

"I don't know why you're going out," she said looking out the window. **"It looks like there's a storm coming."**

"Where's the canoe?" Joe asked, looking toward the lake. **"Did Sean take it out for a paddle?"**

Use quotation marks to acknowledge sources.

When you're reporting a fact from another source, enclose the exact quoted words in quotation marks. The quotation marks show that the words are not your own.

According to the movie critic at my favourite website, the new film's special effects are **"completely mind-boggling."**

In his book, *Creatures of the Earth*, Dr. Hiram Pfisher claims, **"Considering their size, tortoises are the slowest-moving animals on the planet."**

Use quotation marks to identify titles of short works.

Use quotation marks to identify titles of short works, such as short stories, essays, poems, songs, or book chapters. (For books or complete longer works, use italics or underline the title.)

They sang “**O Canada**” before the hockey game.

Amazingly, I once memorized “**The Cremation of Sam McGee**” by Robert Service.

I decided to turn out the light and go to sleep when I saw that the next chapter was “**The Monster Returns from the Dead.**”

In Lesson 2, you read the poem “**The Road Less Travelled.**”

Use quotation marks to emphasize a word in a sentence.

Even when I’ve spelled it right, the word “**February**” always looks wrong.

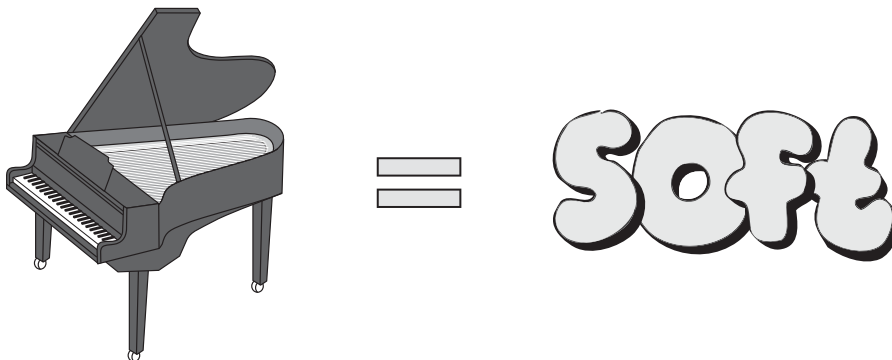
My cousin drives me crazy because she uses the word “**brilliant**” all the time.

Use quotation marks to enclose a technical term, a slang expression, or to define a word.

In poetry, the term “**alliteration**” refers to the repetition of beginning letters of words.

That ring looks like it’s got a lot of “**bling.**”

Do you know that the term “**piano**” means “**soft**”?



Quotations within Quotations:

If you need to put a quote inside another quotation, use single quotation marks.

"My little sister," she giggled, "is so silly. She made up new words to 'Happy Birthday' for my brother's party."

Janey said, **"I distinctly heard Dad reply, 'No!' when Bill asked if he could have the car."**

Rules for Punctuating Quotation Marks

There always needs to be a comma or another form of punctuation between the quotation and the speaker.

- The punctuation always falls beside the last word in the first part of the sentence. If the quotation comes first, the comma is placed inside the quotation.

"We will buy a new computer," stated Joseph.

- If the speaker comes first, the comma is placed before the quotation begins.
Joseph stated, **"We will buy a new computer soon."**

- The quotation always begins with a capital, except if it is broken in half by the speaker.

"We will buy a computer soon," Joseph stated, **"and then we will get high-speed Internet."**

For end punctuation, periods always go inside the quotation if it is the last part of the sentence.

The small girl said sweetly, **"Mommy, I love you."**

Place question marks and exclamation marks inside if they are part of the quotation, or outside if they are part of the main sentence.

Example: The nurse approached her bedside and quietly asked, “How are you feeling today?”

Explanation: The question mark is part of the quotation.

Example: Did the teacher really say, “You don’t have any homework over Spring Break”?

Explanation: The question mark is part of main sentence, not the quotation.



Every time the speaker changes, start a new paragraph so your reader can follow the dialogue.

A woman’s voice said, “Hi, Sharanna. This is Ingrid Hallstram.”

“Oh, hi. How are you?” inquired Sharanna.

“I’m fine,” said Ingrid. “Can you baby-sit tonight?”

Semicolon



A **semicolon** introduces a longer pause than a comma. It can be tricky to use correctly, so save it for the following special situations.

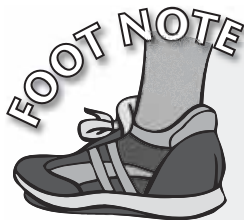
Use a semicolon to connect sentences that are closely related.

The semicolon can connect two complete sentences that are closely related and that are of equal importance. In these examples, the semicolon is a better choice than the period because the break is not as strong as writing two sentences.

Some people like ketchup with their fries; others prefer vinegar.

It hadn't rained for sixty days; the farmers were desperate for water.

I am getting cold; I wish that they'd turn up the heat.



Avoid using a semicolon if short joining words, such as **and**, **but**, or **or**, are used between complete sentences.

Use a semicolon to separate a statement from its explanation.

Be here by three o'clock at the latest; otherwise, we will not wait.

We suffered many indignities; for example, all of our pockets were turned inside out.

Use a semicolon in place of a coordinate conjunction to show cause and effect.

The sun was rising; we had to move.

Use a semicolon to separate items in a series.

Like the comma, the semicolon can be used to separate items in a series if the items already contain commas. The semicolon helps the reader understand where the breaks in the list should be.

In one afternoon at the beach, the Kids' Environmental Clean-Up Crew filled ten bags with aluminum cans, glass, and garbage; cleaned the storm drain; and removed graffiti from the information kiosk.

When we went on holiday, we visited relatives in Drumheller, Alberta; Regina, Saskatchewan; Flin Flon, Manitoba; and Thunder Bay, Ontario.



It can also be used to separate items in a list, especially if the list is headed by a colon.

The camp counsellor told us what to pack: toothbrush and toothpaste; an extra pair of socks; a bottle of water; and some kind of protein snack.