



Tuesday's Tip

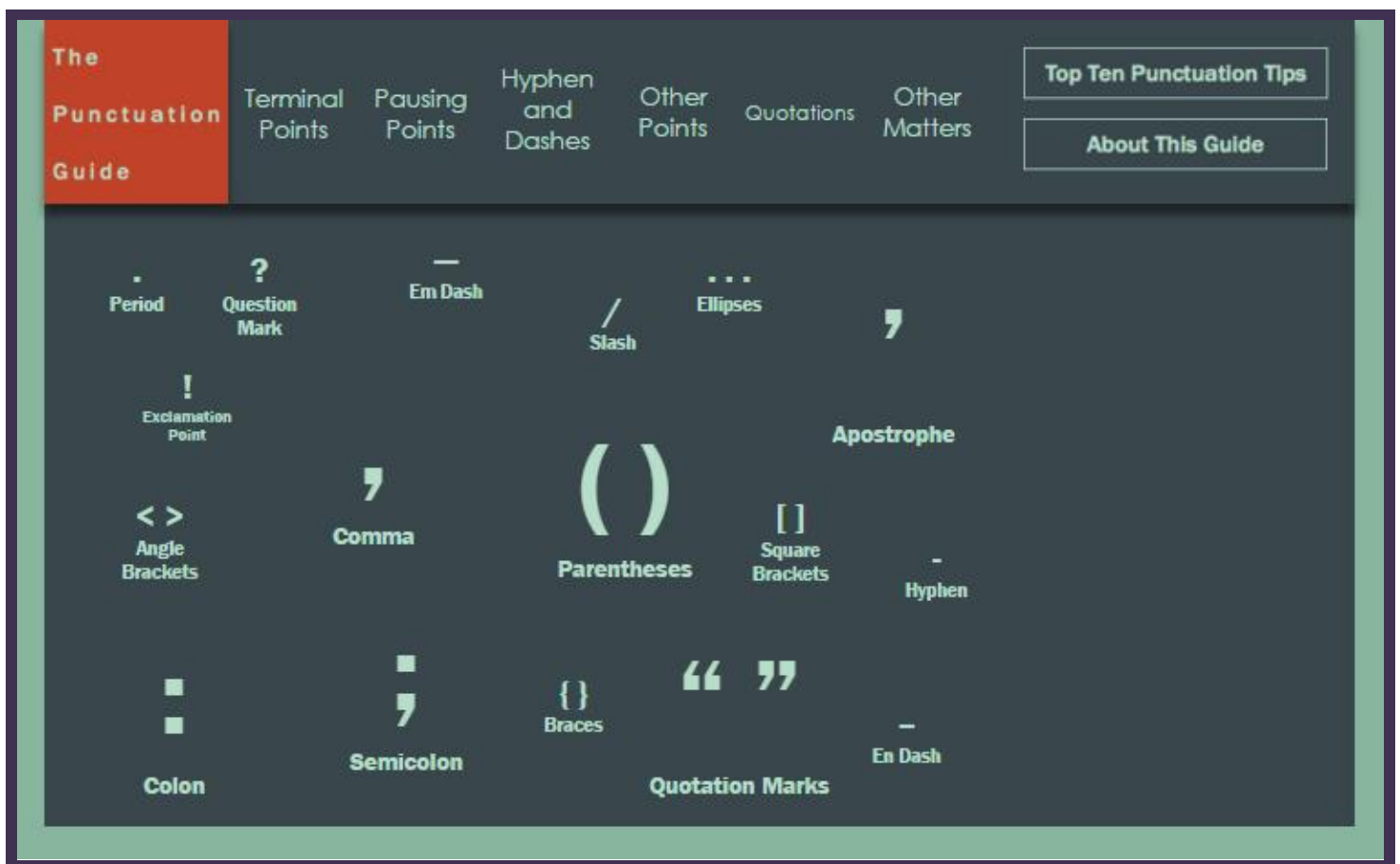
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The Punctuation Guide

November 10, 2015

Are you a writer who wants to do things correctly? Do you wonder when to use a semicolon (and why not use a colon instead?)? When quoting someone, do you know whether the period goes inside or outside of the end quotes? Should you use parentheses or dashes to frame an aside within a sentence? For the answer to these and many, many other vexing punctuation questions, look no further than *The Punctuation Guide*!

<http://www.thepunctuationguide.com>



Here are the “Top Ten” tips with examples for each. The site is very user friendly --and the examples are useful and relevant.

The Punctuation Guide

Terminal Points: . ? ! , ; :
Pausing Points: - - —
Hyphen and Dashes: () ' / < > { }
Other Points: " ... []
Quotations: " ... []
Top Ten Tips: Top Ten Tips
Other Matters: Other Matters

Top Ten Punctuation Tips

- 1. Use apostrophes correctly**

Maybe it's because of its diminutive size, but the apostrophe tends to be neglected and misused in equal measure.

The apostrophe is used to form possessives (e.g., **the school's faculty, our family's crest, the shirt's collar, Bill Thomas's house**) and certain contractions (e.g., **it's, let's, she's, they're, I've, don't**).

The apostrophe is not used to form most plurals (e.g., **she is looking at several schools, the families have similar crests, these shirts are on sale, we are dining with the Thomases**). There are three exceptions: plurals of lowercase letters (e.g., **dot your i's and cross your t's**); plurals of certain words used as words (e.g., **we need to tally the yes's, no's, and maybe's**); and plurals of certain abbreviations (e.g., **the staff includes a dozen Ph.D.'s and four M.D.'s**).
- 2. Know where to place quotation marks**

Periods and commas go inside quotation marks, even if they aren't part of the material being quoted. All other punctuation marks go outside the quotation marks, unless they are part of the material being quoted.

"Any further delay," she said, "would result in a lawsuit."

His latest story is titled "The Beginning of the End"; wouldn't a better title be "The End of the Beginning"?
- 3. Know how to punctuate with parentheses**

When a parenthetical element is included at the end of a larger sentence, the terminal punctuation for the larger sentence goes outside the closing parenthesis.

When a parenthetical sentence exists on its own, the terminal punctuation goes inside the closing parenthesis.

She nonchalantly told us she would be spending her birthday in Venice (Italy, not California). (Unfortunately, we weren't invited.)
- 4. Use a hyphen for compound adjectives**

When two or more words collectively serve as an adjective before the word they are modifying, those words should normally be hyphenated. The major exception is when the first such word is an adverb ending in *-ly*.

The hastily arranged meeting came on the heels of less-than-stellar earnings.
- 5. Distinguish between the colon and the semicolon**

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Terminal Points Pausing Points Hyphen and Dashes Other Points Quotations Top Ten Tips

. ? ! , ; : - - — () ' / <> {} " ... [] Other Matters

Terminal Points

The general rule is that a sentence ends with only one terminal punctuation mark. There are three options:

- Period
- Question mark
- Exclamation point

There are enough exceptions to this general rule, however, to warrant the following chart, which shows nearly all of the scenarios you are likely to face.

Most authorities, including *The Chicago Manual of Style*, have traditionally rejected any situation where a question mark and exclamation point both appear at the end of a sentence, even when such usage was logical. In a break with tradition, the latest (16th) edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* now allows for both punctuation marks to appear. Such usage is reflected in the chart below.

End of sentence	Sentence is a statement	Sentence is a question	Sentence is an exclamation
Abbreviation	<p>Rule: Keep the period for the abbreviation; do not add an additional period.</p> <p>Please meet us at 10:00 a.m.</p>	<p>Rule: Keep the period for the abbreviation; end the sentence with a question mark.</p> <p>Are we supposed to meet at 10:00 a.m.?</p>	<p>Rule: Keep the period for the abbreviation; end the sentence with an exclamation point.</p> <p>She told us to be there at 5:00 a.m.!</p>
Name or title of work ending with a question mark	<p>Rule: The question mark ends the sentence; no additional period.</p> <p>His first appearance on Broadway was in <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i></p>	<p>Rule: The question mark in the name or title ends the sentence; no additional question mark.</p> <p>Who plays the lead in <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i></p>	<p>Rule: Place the exclamation point immediately after the question mark.</p> <p>I can't stand <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?!</i></p>
Quotation ending with a question mark	<p>Rule: The question mark (inside the closing quotation mark) ends the sentence; no period.</p>	<p>Rule: The question mark (inside the closing quotation mark) ends the sentence; no additional question mark.</p>	<p>Rule: Place the exclamation point immediately after the closing quotation mark.</p> <p>Stop asking, "Why me?!"</p>

You can search by function or symbol!

Have fun using this guide!!!