



Semicolons and Other Punctuations

Semicolon (;)

Use a semicolon when you link two independent clauses with no connecting words. *For example:*

I am going home; I intend to stay there.

It rained heavily during the afternoon; we managed to have our picnic anyway.

They couldn't make it to the summit and back before dark; they decided to camp for the night.

You can also use a semicolon when you join two independent clauses together with one of the following conjunctive adverbs (adverbs that join independent clauses): however, moreover, therefore, consequently, otherwise, nevertheless, thus, etc. *For example:*

I am going home; moreover, I intend to stay there.

It rained heavily during the afternoon; however, we managed to have our picnic anyway.

They couldn't make it to the summit and back before dark; therefore, they decided to camp for the night.

The Apostrophe

The apostrophe has three uses:

1. To form possessives of nouns
2. To show the omission of letters
3. To indicate certain plurals of lowercase letters

Forming Possessives of Nouns

To see if you need to make a possessive, turn the phrase around and make it an "of the..." phrase. *For example:*

the boy's hat = the hat of the boy
three days' journey = journey of three days

If the noun after "of" is a building, an object, or a piece of furniture, then **no** apostrophe is needed!



room of the hotel = hotel room
door of the car = car door
leg of the table = table leg

Once you've determined whether you need to make a possessive, follow these rules to create one.

- **add 's to the singular form of the word (even if it ends in -s):**

the owner's car
James's hat (James' hat is also acceptable. For plural, proper nouns that are possessive, use an apostrophe after the 's': "The Egglese's presentation was good." The Egglese are a husband and wife consultant team.)

- **add 's to the plural forms that do not end in -s:**

the children's game
the geese's honking

- **add ' to the end of plural nouns that end in -s:**

two cats' toys
three friends' letters
the countries' laws

- **add 's to the end of compound words:**

my brother-in-law's money

- **add 's to the last noun to show joint possession of an object:**

Todd and Anne's apartment

Showing omission of letters

Apostrophes are used in contractions. A contraction is a word (or set of numbers) in which one or more letters (or numbers) have been omitted. The apostrophe shows this omission. Contractions are common in speaking and in informal writing. To use an apostrophe to create a contraction, place an apostrophe where the omitted letter(s) would go. Here are some examples:

don't = do not
I'm = I am
he'll = he will
who's = who is
shouldn't = should not
didn't = did not
could've = could have (NOT "could of"!)
'60 = 1960

Forming plurals of lowercase letters



Apostrophes are used to form plurals of letters that appear in lowercase; here the rule appears to be more typographical than grammatical, e.g. "three ps" versus "three p's." To form the plural of a lowercase letter, place 's after the letter. There is no need for apostrophes indicating a plural on capitalized letters, numbers, and symbols (though keep in mind that some editors, teachers, and professors still prefer them). Here are some examples:

p's and q's = minding your p's and q's is a phrase believed to be taken from the early days of the printing press when letters were set in presses backwards so they would appear on the printed page correctly. Although the origins of this phrase are disputed, the expression was used commonly to mean, "Be careful, don't make a mistake." Today, the term also indicates maintaining politeness, possibly from "mind your pleases and thank-yous."

Nita's mother constantly stressed minding one's p's and q's.

three Macintosh G4s = three of the Macintosh model G4

There are three G4s currently used in the writing classroom.

many &s = many ampersands

That printed page has too many &s on it.

the 1960s = the years in decade from 1960 to 1969

The 1960s were a time of great social unrest.

The '60s were a time of great social unrest.

Hyphen Use

Two words brought together as a compound may be written separately, written as one word, or connected by hyphens. For example, three modern dictionaries all have the same listings for the following compounds:

hair stylist

hairsplitter

hair-raiser

Another modern dictionary, however, lists hairstylist, not hair stylist. Compounding is obviously in a state of flux, and authorities do not always agree in all cases, but the uses of the hyphen offered here are generally agreed upon.

1. Use a hyphen to join two or more words serving as a single adjective before a noun:



a one-way street

chocolate-covered peanuts

well-known author

However, when compound modifiers come after a noun, they are not hyphenated:

The peanuts were chocolate covered.

The author was well known.

2. Use a hyphen with compound numbers:

forty-six

sixty-three

Our much-loved teacher was sixty-three years old.

3. Use a hyphen to avoid confusion or an awkward combination of letters:

re-sign a petition (vs. resign from a job)

semi-independent (but semiconscious)

shell-like (but childlike)

4. Use a hyphen with the prefixes ex- (meaning former), self-, all-; with the suffix -elect; between a prefix and a capitalized word; and with figures or letters:

ex-husband

self-assured

mid-September

all-inclusive

mayor-elect

anti-American

T-shirt

pre-Civil War

mid-1980s



Quotation Marks

The primary function of quotation marks is to set off and represent exact language (either spoken or written) that has come from somebody else. The quotation mark is also used to designate speech acts in fiction and sometimes poetry. Since you will most often use them when working with outside sources, successful use of quotation marks is a practical defense against accidental plagiarism and an excellent practice in academic honesty. The following rules of quotation mark use are the standard in the United States, although it may be of interest that usage rules for this punctuation do vary in other countries.

The following covers the basic use of quotation marks. For details and exceptions consult the separate sections of this guide.

Direct Quotations

Direct quotations involve incorporating another person's exact words into your own writing.

1. Quotation marks always come in pairs. Do not open a quotation and fail to close it at the end of the quoted material.

2. Capitalize the first letter of a direct quote when the quoted material is a complete sentence.

Mr. Johnson, who was working in his field that morning, said, "The alien spaceship appeared right before my own two eyes."

3. Do not use a capital letter when the quoted material is a fragment or only a piece of the original material's complete sentence.

Although Mr. Johnson has seen odd happenings on the farm, he stated that the spaceship "certainly takes the cake" when it comes to unexplainable activity.

4. If a direct quotation is interrupted mid-sentence, do not capitalize the second part of the quotation.

"I didn't see an actual alien being," Mr. Johnson said, "but I sure wish I had."

5. In all the examples above, note how the period or comma punctuation always comes before the final quotation mark. It is important to realize also that when you are using MLA or some other form of documentation, this punctuation rule may change.

When quoting text with a spelling or grammar error, you should transcribe the error exactly in your own text. However, also insert the term *sic* in italics directly after the mistake, and enclose it in brackets. *Sic* is from the Latin, and translates to "thus," "so," or "just as that." The word tells the reader that your quote is an exact reproduction of what you found, and the error is not your own.

Mr. Johnson says of the experience, "It's made me reconsider the existence of extraterrestials [*sic*]."

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/577/1/>



6. Quotations are most effective if you use them sparingly and keep them relatively short. Too many quotations in a research paper will get you accused of not producing original thought or material (they may also bore a reader who wants to know primarily what YOU have to say on the subject).

Indirect Quotations

Indirect quotations are not exact wordings but rather rephrasings or summaries of another person's words. In this case, it is not necessary to use quotation marks. However, indirect quotations still require proper citations, and you will be committing plagiarism if you fail to do so.

Mr. Johnson, a local farmer, reported last night that he saw an alien spaceship on his own property.

Many writers struggle with when to use direct quotations versus indirect quotations. Use the following tips to guide you in your choice.

Use direct quotations when the source material uses language that is particularly striking or notable. Do not rob such language of its power by altering it.

Martin Luther King Jr. believed that the end of slavery was important and of great hope to millions of slaves done horribly wrong.

The above should never stand in for:

Martin Luther King Jr. said of the Emancipation Proclamation, "This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice."

Use an indirect quotation (or paraphrase) when you merely need to summarize key incidents or details of the text.

Use direct quotations when the author you are quoting has coined a term unique to her or his research and relevant within your own paper.

When to use direct quotes versus indirect quotes is ultimately a choice you'll learn a feeling for with experience. However, always try to have a sense for why you've chosen your quote. In other words, never put quotes in your paper simply because your teacher says, "You must use quotes."