

CAPITAL LETTERS

1. All sentences begin with a capital letter.
2. All headings use capital letters (you don't need capitals for the small joining words).

EXAMPLE: *Exploring the Atlantic Ocean*

3. Capital letters are also used for some abbreviations.

EXAMPLE: *HSC, ASAP, PTO.*

4. Capital letters are used in the titles of books, plays, short stories, articles, films, poems, songs, videos and magazines. You don't need capitals for the small joining words.

EXAMPLE:

"Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom" (film)

"The Power of One" (novel)

"The Man from Snowy River" (poem)

5. The following groups of words also begin with capital letters:

The names of **specific places** (*Sydney, Newcastle*)

The names of **people** (*Robert Frost, William Shakespeare*)

The names of **important titles** (*Principal, Prime Minister*)

The names of **groups of people** (*Year 7, Government*)

The names of **states and countries** (*Victoria, Australia*)

The names of **races** (*Chinese, Indonesian*)

The names of **languages** (*English, French*)

The names of **continents** (*Europe, Asia*)

The names of **days and months of the year** (*Monday, February*)

The names of **festivals and holidays** (*Easter, Australia Day*)

The names of **geographic features** like mountains, lakes, oceans and rivers (*Pacific Ocean, Lake Ayre, Murray River*)

The names of **buildings** (*Sydney Opera House*)

The names of **events** (*America's Cup, Australian Open*)

APOSTROPHES

We use apostrophes for **three** purposes:

1. To show where one or more letters have been left out in phrases. These are called **contractions**.

EXAMPLE:

Don't = do not

Can't = can not

Should've = should have

2. To show where one or more **numbers** have been left out.

EXAMPLE:

The class of '98 = the class of 1998

3. To show **possession** or ownership of people and objects.

EXAMPLE:

The truck's headlights

My grandmother's car

My friend's teacher

When the person or thing is **SINGULAR** (only one) the apostrophe goes before the 's':

EXAMPLE:

The car's windscreen was smashed.

When the person or thing is **PLURAL** (more than one) the apostrophe goes after the 's':

EXAMPLE:

The dogs' tails were wagging.


COLONS

The colon has three main uses in writing:

1. It is used to introduce a list.

EXAMPLE:

There were many things I needed to take: a jumper, a toothbrush, soap and my sleeping bag.




2. It is used to introduce an example as it is used in the above and below points.

EXAMPLE:

3. A colon can also be used when you want to add an extra statement to a sentence to help explain it further.

EXAMPLE:

I invited only my favourite relatives to my party: my two cousins.



COMMAS

1. Commas are used to break a sentence into smaller sections to make it easier to read and understand.

EXAMPLE:

Although I am only in Year 7, I can already express myself well in writing, but I expect I will continue to improve in Year 8.

2. Commas are used to separate a list of items in a sentence.

EXAMPLE:

This morning I bought an apple, chewing gum, biscuits and a bottle of water from the canteen.

3. They are also used to separate a string of words used to describe something or someone:

EXAMPLE:

He is a big, mean, ugly man.

4. Commas are used to separate part of a sentence that provides extra information:

EXAMPLE:

My sister, who always gets into trouble, was late again.

5. Commas are used to separate direct speech from the rest of a sentence:

EXAMPLE:

The Principal said, "I was impressed with your efforts."

6. They are also used to separate two pieces of information in one sentence. For example:

EXAMPLE:

While I was eating, our dog was barking outside.

COMMON MIX-UPS

IT'S and ITS

Use **IT'S** when you mean "it is" or "it has". The apostrophe tells us that a letter is missing. **EXAMPLE:**

It's a hot day today = It is a hot day today.

Use **ITS** to show ownership. **EXAMPLE:**

*The dog kept chasing its tail
The tree drops its leaves in autumn.*

HE'S and HIS

Use **HE'S** when you mean "he is". The apostrophe tells us that a letter is missing. **EXAMPLE:**

He's a very lucky young man = He is a very lucky young man.

Use **HIS** to refer to a male. **EXAMPLE:**

*The wind blew his hair.
His surfboard was strapped to the roof of his car.*

YOU'RE and YOUR

Use **YOU'RE** when you mean "you are". The apostrophe tells us that a letter is missing. **EXAMPLE:**

*You're coming to the party later aren't you?
You're in big strife!" said his sister.*

Use **YOUR** for all other cases. **EXAMPLE:**

*"Pick up your socks," yelled Mum
Your hair looks better that way," Sam said.*

COMMON MIX-UPS

TO and TOO

'Too' is used in the sense of 'too much'. For example:

*The water is too cold for swimming today.
She wasn't too happy the other day.*

Or you can use 'too' instead of also or instead. For example:

*'Yeah, you can come too'
'Don't forget to take the others too'*

In nearly every other case the word 'to' will be the correct word to use. For example:

Mum asked me to go to the shop to get some bread.

THERE, THEIR and THEY'RE

'There' is used to refer to place. Remember this by thinking 'here and there'. For example:

*I'm going over there this afternoon.
Up there on the hill, there is a big tree.*

'Their' is used to show ownership. For example:

*The students put their books on the desk.
The kids were holding their hats on their heads in the wind.*

'They're' is the same as saying there are. For example:

They're going to the movies = They are going to the movies.

I think they're arriving now = I think they are arriving now.

COMMON MIX-UPS

WHERE and WE'RE

'Where' is used when referring to a place. It is often used to begin a question. For example:

'Where have you been all this time?'

This map tells me where the town is.

'We're' is the same as saying we are. For example:

We're going to that party = We are going to that party

When we're tired we'll sleep = When we are tired we'll sleep

WHO'S and WHOSE

'Who's' is the same as saying who is or who has. For example:

'Who's going to town?' = 'Who is going to town?'

'Who's got my pencil case?' = 'Who has my pencil case?'

'Whose' is used to show possession. If 'who is' or 'who's' does not make sense in your sentence, use 'whose'. For example:

That's the man whose house was robbed yesterday.

We went to see the teacher, whose office is in D Block.

USING NUMBERS IN WRITING

There are many different rules for using numbers when writing in English. These guidelines can differ for other subjects/topics or for specific publication points.

1. In general English writing exercises try to always write the number as a word.

EXAMPLE:

There were at least a hundred girls and sixty five boys at the dance.

2. If the figure is large, it can be acceptable to write it as a number.

EXAMPLE:

There were 4, 500 students at today's rally.

3. If you are using facts and statistics you can write them with numbers.

EXAMPLE:

More than 35% of candidates applied for the position.

4. Avoid writing terms as numbers such as 5th or 7th. Instead use the words fifth and seventh.

5. If you are referring to a date such as the 22nd of November then using a number is acceptable.

ELLIPSIS

An ellipsis point is three dots placed together to indicate words have been left out or something else is to come...

1. It can be used in the middle of a long quote to indicate you've left out some words.

EXAMPLE:

'Australians all let us rejoice... gurt by sea'

2. An ellipsis can be used at the beginning or end of a sentence to suggest something has or will happen.

EXAMPLE:

I walked to the edge of the cliff and looked around me. My hands were in tight knots as I took a deep ragged breathe and stepped out...

EXCLAMATION MARKS

1. Writers use exclamation marks when they want to be dramatic in their writing - to show shock, surprise, horror or fascination.

EXAMPLE:

'Wow! What a fabulous party!'

2. When using exclamation marks in speech, place the mark *inside* the inverted commas.

EXAMPLE:

'Look out! It's coming your way.' She yelled.
'Stop!' he cried out.

TIP!

Don't overuse exclamation marks or they will lose their impact.

Don't use lots of exclamation marks in your formal writing (keep it for your texts and emails).

QUESTION MARKS

1. When you ask a question, you must always end the question with a question mark.

EXAMPLE:

What are you doing this weekend?

Was it true? Was this really happening to me?

2. If you are writing dialogue (speech or a conversation) your question mark should be placed inside the inverted commas.

EXAMPLE:

'What's your story about, Emilio?' asked the teacher.

FULL STOPS

1. Every sentence must end with a full stop.
2. Full stops are used to separate ideas so that the reader doesn't get confused.

EXAMPLE:

It had been a long day. The air was hot and the humid dusty wind wasn't helping. I just wanted to jump into an icy cold pool.

3. Full stops are also used to separate capital letters in some abbreviations.

EXAMPLE:

Etc. = etcetera

Para. = paragraph

M.D = medical doctor

Tip! When you end a sentence with a question mark or an exclamation mark you do not need a full stop as well + when typing, always have a space after each full stop.

INVERTED COMMAS

(SPEECH/QUOTATION MARKS)

Inverted commas are used to indicate the actual words spoken by the characters we create in our writing.

1. The inverted commas are placed before and after spoken words. For example:

'I remember meeting him once, but I can't remember what he looks like,' said my father.

You can also separate the above example like this:

'I remember meeting him once,' said my father, 'but I can't remember what he looks like.'

2. Inverted commas are also used to indicate any quoted material (words written by somebody else). This is why inverted commas are sometimes called quotation marks.

The book 'The Promise' is very sad, as shown in the following quote, 'He looked into her sad eyes and whispered goodbye. It would be the last time he would ever see her face.'

3. All titles of short stories, films, poems or novels should always be placed in inverted commas. For example:

'Buffy the Vampire Slayer'

'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'

Tip! Wondering whether to use one ('example') or two ("example") quotation marks? Both are acceptable.

PUNCTUATING SPEECH

1. When writing spoken words (dialogue), use a comma rather than a full stop if your sentence continues after the inverted commas. Place the comma inside the inverted commas. For example:

'I'm sure that's where they'll be,' said Mum.

2. If you use a question mark or an exclamation mark inside the inverted commas, you do not need a comma. For example:

'Lights, camera, action!' yelled the director.

3. Always begin the first word of your direct speech with a capital letter, no matter where it occurs in the sentence:

She asked me, 'Why didn't you go to work today?'

4. If you are writing a conversation, always begin a new line for each new speaker:

'I can't believe you told him,' Samantha cried out.

'Well, he needed to know!'

'But you could have been nicer about it,' she sighed.

'I was as nice as I could be, given the situation.'

SENTENCES

1. A sentence is a complete statement, a group of words which makes sense.
2. It begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, and will include any other punctuation marks needed to make its meaning clear.
3. A full sentence should never start with 'because'.
4. A number of sentences makes up a paragraph.

EXAMPLE OF A FULL SENTENCE

Question *Where is the town of Lightning Ridge?*

Answer One - *In New South Wales.*

Not a full sentence!

Answer Two - *The town of Lightning Ridge is in north western New South Wales.*

A full sentence!

PARAGRAPHS

1. A paragraph is a group of sentences dealing with the same topic or idea.
2. Each new paragraph signals a change in the direction of the writing.
3. When using speech, begin a new paragraph (a new line) each time a new person speaks.

SEMI-COLONS

1. Semi-colons connect two related statements which need to be linked with more strength than if they were separate sentences. For example:

Matt was an excellent batsman; he often scored more than fifty runs.

That's my pencil case; yours is over there.

2. Semi-colons also help to separate complicated items in a list. Look at the following examples. The first paragraph only uses commas, while the second uses semi-colons and commas.

Paragraph One

I met some interesting people in my travels: a foreign journalist, Jake Brown, a Canadian ski instructor, Marg Day, who had trekked through Nepal, Joan Darby, a teacher from Newcastle and a bloke who lives down the street.

Paragraph Two

I met some interesting people in my travels: a foreign journalist; Jake Brown, a Canadian ski instructor; Marg Day, who had trekked through Nepal; Joan Darby, a teacher from Newcastle and a bloke who lives down the street.

TITLES

1. ALL titles and headings should have capital letters for the important words. The joining words such as 'the', 'and', 'it', 'of' or 'as' do not need capital letters. For example:

Studying the Music of Beethoven (heading)

2. If you are writing the title of a book, cd, film or the title of something you must also use inverted commas to show that it is a title of something. For example:

"The Incredibles" (film)

"The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 3/4" (novel)

"Aliens Crash into Desert!" (newspaper article)

"Dolly" (magazine)

NB Always check you are correctly spelling the composer's name correctly and with capital letters.

Tip!

It is also acceptable in a handwritten essay to underline titles. It is acceptable in typed work to *italicise* titles.