

SR ONLINE

Punctuation Usage Guide

Aside from correct spelling, we will want the learners to understand to use punctuations in the following ways

Uses of capital letters:

1. **Beginning of a Sentence:** The first word of every sentence should always start with a capital letter. Example: **T**oday is a sunny day.
2. **Proper Nouns:** Names of specific people, places, organizations, or things are always capitalized. Example: **J**ohn visited **P**aris and toured the **E**iffel **T**ower.
3. **Pronoun "I":** The personal pronoun "I" is always capitalized, regardless of where it appears in the sentence. Example: **I** love reading books.
4. **Days, Months, and Holidays:** The names of days of the week, months of the year, and holidays are capitalized. Example: **M**onday, **D**ecember, **C**hristmas.
5. **Titles and Headings:** The first word and important words in titles of books, movies, articles, and other works are capitalized.

NB: WE ARE NOT USING INVERTED COMMA FOR BOOKS.

Example: "The **G**reat **G**atsby, **H**arry **P**otter" and "The **C**hamber of **S**ecrets".

6. **First Word in Direct Quotes:** When directly quoting someone, the first word in the quote is capitalized. Example: She said, "**W**e are ready for the event".
7. **Abbreviations and Acronyms:** Common abbreviations and acronyms are capitalized.
Example: **N**ASA, **U**SA, **U**N.
8. **Names of Nationalities, Languages, and Religions:** Words referring to nationalities, languages, and religions are always capitalized.
Example: He speaks **E**nglish and is learning **J**apanese. She follows **I**slam.
9. **Names of Brands:** The names of brands, companies, and trademarks are capitalized.

Example: I bought a pair of **N**ike shoes.

Uses of the period:

1. **End of Declarative Sentences:** A period is used to mark the end of a declarative or imperative sentence, indicating that the thought is complete.

Example: The meeting will start at 9 a.m.
2. **Abbreviations:** Periods are used in some abbreviations, especially with shortened forms of words. Example: Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.
3. **End of Commands:** Imperative sentences, which give commands, also typically end with a period. Example: Close the door.
4. **Titles of Articles:** When referencing article titles, a period is placed at the end of the sentence if it is part of the text. Example: His article is titled "How to Build a Website".
5. **Numbers and Decimals:** A period is used as a decimal point in numbers.

Example: The price is ₦3.99.

Uses of the comma

1. **Separating Items in a List:** Commas are used to separate three or more items in a series or list. Example: I bought apples, oranges, bananas and grapes.
2. **Before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences:** When joining two independent clauses (complete thoughts) with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet), a comma is placed before the conjunction.

Example: I wanted to go to the party, but I had to work.
3. **After Introductory Phrases or Words:** Commas are used after introductory words, phrases, or clauses to separate them from the main part of the sentence.

Example: After the meeting, we went out for dinner.
4. **Before Quotations:** A comma is placed before a direct quotation when the sentence introduces the quote. Example: She said, "I'll meet you at the café."
5. **Direct Address:** A comma is used to set off the name of a person being directly addressed.

Example: John, can you help me with this?

6. **In Dates:**

Dates: Use commas to separate the day from the month, and the year from the rest of the sentence. Example: He was born on April 15, 1990, in London.

7. **Tag Questions:** When a tag question is added at the end of a sentence to seek confirmation, a comma is used before the tag. Example: You're coming to the party, aren't you?

Uses of the question mark

1. **End of a Direct Question:** A question mark is placed at the end of a sentence that asks a direct question. Example: What time is the meeting?
2. **End of Rhetorical Questions:** Rhetorical questions, which are asked for effect rather than an answer, also end with a question mark.

Example: Who wouldn't love a vacation right now?

3. **Polite Requests Phrased as Questions:** Even when a request is phrased as a question, a question mark is used. Example: Could you please pass the salt?
4. **Tag Questions:** When a statement is followed by a tag question (a small question at the end seeking confirmation), it ends with a question mark.

Example: It's a nice day, isn't it?

5. **Question Marks:** This goes inside the quotation marks if it is part of the quote but outside if it applies to the entire sentence.

Example: He asked, "Are you coming?"

Example: Did she really say "I'm leaving"?

Uses of inverted comma (a.k.a quotation marks)

NOTE:

- We are sticking to the double inverted comma ONLY.
 1. **Direct Speech or Dialogue:** Quotation marks are used to enclose the exact words that someone says or writes. The placement of the period and question mark relative to the

closing quotation mark depends on the context of the quoted material. **If the period belongs to the quoted material**, it is placed **inside the quotation marks**. But, **If the period does not belong to the quoted material but ends the main sentence**, it is placed **outside the quotation marks**

Example: 1. She said, "I'll be there in five minutes."

2. The article mentioned "climate change as a global challenge".

2. **Titles of Short Works:** Quotation marks are used to denote the titles of short works, such as articles, poems, short stories, essays, songs, or chapters within a book.

Example: My favourite poem is "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.

3. **Punctuation with Quotation Marks:**

Commas and Periods: In British English, commas and periods are placed outside the closing quotation marks. Example: "I don't know", she replied.

Question Marks and Exclamation Points: These go inside the quotation marks if they are part of the quote but outside if they apply to the entire sentence.

Example: He asked, "Are you coming?"

Example: Did she really say, "I'm leaving"?

Uses of the exclamation mark

1. **Expressing Strong Emotions:** The exclamation mark is used at the end of sentences to express excitement, surprise, anger, joy, or other strong emotions.

Example: Wow, that was amazing!

Example: Stop it right now!

2. **Commands or Urgent Requests:** It is often used in imperative sentences (commands) to show urgency, emphasis, or a sense of importance.

Example: Please help me!

Example: Run as fast as you can!

Example: How lucky we are!

Uses of the apostrophe

1. Use the apostrophe with contractions. The apostrophe is always placed at the spot where the letter(s) has been removed.

Examples: *don't, isn't*
 You're right.
 She's a great teacher.

2. Use the apostrophe to show possession. Place the apostrophe before the s to show singular possession.

Examples: *one boy's hat*
 one woman's hat
With names ending with 's':
 Mr. Jones' golf clubs
 Texas' weather

3. The plurals for numbers used as nouns are not formed with apostrophes.

Examples: *The 1990s (not the 1990's)*
 The '90s (not the '90's)
 The mid-'70s (not the mid-'70's)

4. **Common Errors to Avoid** (It's vs. Its)

It's = It is or It has.

Example: **It's** raining outside.

Its = Possessive form of "it."

Example: The dog wagged **its** tail.