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The Untamed World of Punctuation (Part 2)

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Part 1: The Dash

1. Introducing dramatic elements
2. Avoiding misuse of the dash

Part 2: Within the Word

Section A: Hyphens

1. Forming compound words
2. Writing numbers
3. Showing word-breaks at the end of a line
4. Making adjectives

Section B: Apostrophes

1. Writing contractions
2. Writing possessives
3. Writing some plurals
4. Determining when and when not to use an apostrophe

Part 3: Marks That Come in Pairs

Section A: Parentheses

1. Inserting information into a sentence
2. Using with other punctuation marks

Section B: Quotation Marks

1. Writing direct quotations, titles, and defined words
2. Indicating sarcasm and irony
3. Distinguishing between direct quotations
4. Using single quotation marks
5. Using with other punctuation marks

Section C: Brackets

1. Inserting editorial comments

Part 4: And the Rest...

Section A: Slashes

1. Writing lines of poetry
2. Indicating choices

Section B: Ellipses

1. Indicating omitted text
2. Using with other punctuation marks

Pragmatic Proposals for Punctuating Properly (Helpful Hints)

1. Think of punctuation as a tool you can use to add interest and clarity to your writing, not as a rigid system of rules.



2. Dashes are a great way to add a surprising element to the middle or end of a sentence. Don't get too hung up on where you can use them—they work just about anywhere! However, much like the exclamation point, too many dashes can be annoying.

The AND OH YOU'RE GONNA LOVE THIS, ARE YOU READY? BECAUSE HERE IT IS Test If you can shove all of that into a sentence and it seems appropriate, you've found a potential site for a dash. If it seems like too much, then maybe using a dash is too much.



3. REMEMBER REMEMBER REMEMBER: Hyphens are half as long as a dash. Dashes are twice as long as hyphens. HYPHENS AND DASHES ARE NOT THE SAME! Use hyphens to connect words to make adjectives, to write the numbers twenty-one through ninety-nine, to show word breaks at the end of typewritten lines, and to spell certain compound words. Oh yeah, HYPHENS AND DASHES ARE NOT THE SAME!



4. Apostrophes are one of the most abused punctuation marks around. Use apostrophes when writing contractions, possessives, and a *few* different kinds of plurals.
5. Contractions are pretty straightforward: apostrophes show where letters are missing. Keep that in mind when deciding between "it's" and "its," "you're" and "your," "they're" and "their," and "who's" and "whose." If you can split the word up into two words and the sentence still makes sense, use an apostrophe.

6. To make a word possessive, add an apostrophe “s” to the end of the word UNLESS it is both plural and ends in “s” itself, in which case you just add an apostrophe.

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
DOESN'T END IN “S”:	woodpecker's	people's
ENDS IN “S”:	Charles's	monkeys'

7. The only times you use apostrophes to write plurals are with numbers, letters, and words that are being defined or referred to as words.

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8. Parentheses are used to insert information into the middle of a sentence that is sort of related to the sentence but not that important. That information can be in whatever form you choose.

9. Here are the rules governing parentheses and other forms of punctuation:

1. Don't put a comma before an opening parenthesis.
2. Punctuate the stuff inside parentheses as you normally would.
3. If the stuff inside parentheses has an end mark, put it inside the parentheses if it belongs to the stuff and outside the parentheses if it belongs to the sentence as a whole.

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10. Quotation marks are used to surround a direct quotation (not a paraphrase); titles of songs, poems, short stories, and magazine articles; defined words or words that are being referred to as words; and words or phrases that are being used sarcastically.
11. If you are writing a quotation inside of another quotation, use

single quotation marks ‘ ’ for the inner one.

12. Here are the rules governing quotation marks and other forms of punctuation:

1. No other punctuation mark ever comes immediately before the opening quotation mark.
2. Commas and periods always go before the closing quotation mark.
3. Semicolons, colons, and dashes always go outside the closing quotation mark.
4. Question marks and exclamation points sometimes come before the closing quotation mark, sometimes after, depending on whether they're ending the quoted material or the entire sentence.

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13. Brackets are a specialized form of parentheses. They're used to insert an editorial comment (something you've said) into the middle of a direct quotation (something somebody else has said).

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14. Slashes aren't very sophisticated marks, which is why we love them. Use them to separate lines of poetry in a paper, to show a choice between two or more items, or to write fractions like 2/3.

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15. Ellipses are pretty unsophisticated as well. Ellipses show where text from a direct quotation has been omitted, or to show a trailing-off at the end of a sentence.

16. The only catch when using ellipses is you must remember to include the end mark if they come at the end of a sentence. Yep, that means from time to time you'll need to use four dots: three for the ellipses and one for the period. Of course, we could go on and on about ellipses....