

Punctuation

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Commas

- Use after "said" when introducing a direct quote
- Use before and after a state name and a year
- Use in a series but not before "and"
- Use before "etc."
- Use after an introductory clause, phrase or words
- Use between two independent clauses
- Use around nonrestrictive words
- Use before "also," "as well," "too" and "yet."

Never Use Commas When...

- Never use before a subordinate clause
 - We went outside because it stopped raining.
- Never use between a compound direct object
 - I still have the flu, but I'm on medication and I'm not contagious.
- Never use before a conjunction in a series *except* when it would help avoid confusion
 - My favorite sandwiches are turkey and swiss, peanut butter and jelly, and meatball.
- Never use after a quotation mark
 - "We ate outside," she said.
- Never use with "Jr.," "Sr.," "III," and the like
- Never use with "Inc."

Quotation Marks

- Double quotes for direct quote in the U.S.
- Only use with direct quotes
- Avoid single-word quotes
- Most punctuation goes inside quotes in the U.S.
- Question marks and quotation marks together are confusing

Attribution

- Use full name and title on first reference
- Last name only on second reference unless needed for clarity
- Transition between sources
- Use “said” for most direct quotes
- Place at first natural break in the sentence, which may be at the end of the quote
- No commas need with partial quotes, but try to avoid partial quotes

Other Marks

- Use semicolons with commas to avoid confusion
- Colons can introduce long quotes
- Colons can introduce a list
- Use dashes for pauses longer than a comma
- Use dashes instead of parentheses
- Apostrophes show contractions or possession, not plurals (usually)
- Slashes only for fractions and websites
- Avoid exclamation points!

Parting Advice

- Look it up!