

Use Punctuation to Indicate Pauses and to End Sentences

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This worksheet reviews end punctuation and commas. Each punctuation mark is explained in detail and followed by two examples.

Part 1: End Punctuation

There are three ways to end sentences:

1) Periods are the most commonly used end punctuation mark. They indicate the end of a sentence. When you read, you should stop momentarily whenever you encounter a period. Sentences reflect complete thoughts, and periods reflect the end of each thought.

Examples:

I'm not a fan of cafeteria food, so I usually bring my own lunch.
Getting to sleep late is my favorite part of the weekend.

2) Question marks are used at the end of interrogative sentences, which we more commonly refer to as questions.

Examples:

What is your favorite site for downloading music?
Do you prefer your pizza with pepperoni or sausage?

3) Exclamation points are used to show strong emotion at the end of a sentence. The emotion may be positive or negative.

Examples:

You're the best teacher ever!
I told you three times to clean your room!

Part 2: Commas

If periods indicate a "full stop" at the end of a sentence, then commas indicate a pause. When reading silently or aloud, you should slow down briefly but not stop until you get to the period. Where sentences can have only one end punctuation mark, they can have more than one comma. There are multiple situations where you would use a comma:

1) Use a comma to separate items in a series or list.

Examples:

When you're in the store, please pick up milk, bread, eggs, coffee, and apples.
A good friend is loyal, kind, and forgiving.

2) Use a comma for an introductory element.

Examples:

Wait, you forgot your backpack.

When you have a chance, put away your clean laundry.

3) Use a comma in compound sentences to separate the two complete thoughts.

Examples:

London has great theater, but Paris has better food.

My sister plays basketball, and my brother plays soccer.

4) Use a comma in a dependent clause, which has a verb but can't stand alone as a sentence.

Examples:

When I wake up in the morning, I like to have a cup of coffee.

After the movie, we walked home from the theater.

5) Use commas when your sentence has an appositive, which is a word or group of words that explains another part of your sentence.

Examples:

Milwaukee, where I used to live, gets a lot of snow.

Mr. Moss, my math teacher, gives extra help on Monday and Wednesday.

6) Use commas when including quotes in your writing.

Examples:

"We always eat pizza on Friday nights. I'm bored with it," complained Joseph.

The teacher said, "Please make sure to finish your book reports by the end of the week."

7) Use commas when writing towns, states, and countries.

Examples:

The President resides at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C.

Jones Beach State Park is located in Wantagh, New York.

8) Use commas when writing dates.

Examples:

The Declaration of Independence was ratified on July 4, 1776.

The next Winter Olympics will begin on February 7, 2014, and end on February 23, 2014.