# Analysis

## What is the purpose of punctuation?

In speech, features such as intonation, pitch and pauses can be used to clarify meaning. In writing, punctuation performs this function. Punctuation enables the writer to say exactly what they want to say and therefore minimize misunderstanding. It is therefore extremely important in academic writing. The following table identifies the most commonly used punctuation marks in English and their functions. You should refer back to the text on the previous page to see the punctuation in context.

| Punctuation mark | Name | Function(s) of punctuation mark |
|---|---|---|
| ' | apostrophe | 1 To designate possession (with nouns).<br>2 To replace deleted letters in words (contraction). |
| () [] | brackets | 1 To add information which is important, but not directly relevant to the sentence.<br>2 To indicate authorship when referencing. |
| : | colon | 1 To introduce a series, example or explanation.<br>2 To separate the year and page (in referencing). |
| , | comma | To divide the sentence into smaller units of meaning (e.g., RELATIVE CLAUSES, SUBORDINATE CLAUSES, lists).<br>See below for further details. |
| – abc – | dashes | To represent a break in thought or idea. |
| … | ellipsis | To show where words/sentences have been deleted in a longer passage of writing. |
| ! | exclamation mark | To indicate extreme emotion, e.g., surprise, amazement or happiness. |
| . | full stop/period | To mark the end of a sentence. |
| - | hyphen | To join separate words together to form COMPOUND WORDS. |
| ? | question mark | To indicate that a question is being asked. |
| ' ' and " " | quotation marks | To make it explicit that an author's exact words are being used. |
| ; | semicolon | 1 To specify a close thematic relationship between two clauses within a sentence.<br>2 To divide a list of bullet points. |

▣ In lists: Commas can be used to separate items in lists, for introductory adverbs and for APPOSITION.

▣ Separating clauses: If a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE precedes an INDEPENDENT CLAUSE, a comma can be used.

▣ Certain relative clauses: Non-defining relative clauses, which add information, need commas.

▣ APPOSITION: a way of defining nouns by using commas is an effective academic tool.

### A note on commas

Commas are a very important piece of punctuation which have a number of different functions. Many languages (especially European) have them, but their usage can be quite varied. Therefore, a more detailed analysis of their use in academic English is presented on the left.

## Language

- Have you used any informal language? (Step 1)
- Have you used collocations properly? (Step 38)
- Are you sure the phrase you have used exists? (Steps 37, 40)
- Are you sure there is no mother-tongue influence? (Step 11)
- Have you made any silly spelling mistakes?
- Have you repeated any language unnecessarily? (Step 37)

## Grammar/structure

### Word/phrase level

- Are the verbs in the right tense? (Step 41)
- Have you used the right voice? (Step 41)
- Do the subject and verb agree?
- If necessary, are nouns preceded by an article? (Step 44)
- Have adjectives/adverbs been placed in the appropriate position? (Step 45)
- Do the adjectives/adverbs genuinely add value, or are they unnecessary? (Step 45)

### Sentences

- Is the word order correct? (Step 17)
- Do all your sentences have a verb in them?
- Is the punctuation correct? (Step 43)

### Paragraph level

- Are all the paragraphs of roughly equal length? (Step 18)
- Does each paragraph have a good topic sentence? (Step 18)
- Is there a good balance of different types of sentence within the paragraph? (Step 26)

### Using Microsoft Word

The overwhelming majority of academic essays are written in Microsoft Word. As such, it is important to know how this program works, and where it can be useful (or unhelpful) in identifying language/grammar problems in your writing.

✓ Identifies common grammatical and punctuation problems such as fragment sentences, lack of subject–verb agreement and misplaced commas.
✓ Detects words which have been misspelt.
✓ Can automatically correct certain idiosyncracies which you might have.

✗ Provides advice based on standard rather than academic writing. As such, some of the conventions/requirements are different (e.g., increased use of the passive voice).
✗ May automatically 'correct' a misspelling to something which is actually incorrect.
✗ May switch between languages, or different varieties of English.

## What symbols can be used to indicate problems?

When you receive feedback on your essays, your tutor may use a system of symbols to indicate particular problems, as indicated in the table below. Knowledge of these will help you identify and learn from your problems. It may be useful to learn these symbols and use them yourself. This can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your proofreading. You may find it useful to develop your own system, or other symbols, in order to identify personal problems.

| Symbol | Meaning | Symbol | Meaning | Symbol | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ࡠ | Delete something | ∽ | Swap around | ⌀ | Missing/confusing info |
| ∧ | Insert something | ≡ | Capitalize | ⊙ | Insert a full stop |
| # or Y | Add space | / | Make lower-case | ⋏ | Insert a comma |
| ⌒ or ↑ | Delete space, close up | ⌐ or ¶ | New paragraph | ˮˮ | Insert quotation marks |