

The Prose Toolbox Series

SIX ESSENTIAL

COORDINATING MARKS

GAINING MASTERY OF DASHES, HYPHENS, PARENTHESES, BRACKETS, ELLIPSES, AND ITALICS

PUNCTUATION SUMMARY SHEET

Dashes —

Used as strong commas.

- Time marches on, even for children—although the pace seems to crawl when they're young.

With compound sentences.

- I look forward to the unsurpassable joys of staying close to home—and that joy is the key here.

To distinguish more distinct (external) pauses from the internal-comma pauses.

- Sporting accessories—hockey sticks, boxing gloves, a burst football, a pair of sweaty shorts turned inside out—lay all over the floor.
- Schools are meant to tag the unfit—with poor grades, remedial placement, and other punishments.

Used as colons.

- Promoters of instructional technology have reverted to a much more modest claim—that the computer is just another tool.

Used as reverse-directional colons.

- The road ahead, the houses and people, the trees and fields that flashed by the windows—these made up his world.

To create dramatic pauses.

- She will forgive you—in the end.

To enclose a sentence-within-a-sentence.

- This dignified man—he kept his case open for money—could not play the mandolin.

Used as parentheses (to enclose explanatory information).

- The tower—a ruin—sat at the highest point.

To emphasize repeated words.

- I'm better than that—better than I was before.

To emphasize contrasting statements.

- The *hors d'oeuvres* were bowls of cherry tomatoes and carrot sticks—no brownies from a box, no cheese sticks.

With appositives.

- It seems so cruel and unjust to strike a helpless animal—a harmless little creature.

Parentheses ()

To enclose explanatory information.

- The tower (a ruin) sat at the highest point.

To enclose a sentence-within-a-sentence.

- This dignified man (he kept his case open for money) could not play the mandolin.

To distinguish more distinct pauses from the internal-comma pauses.

- To do this, they use specific techniques (flattery, repetition, fear, and humor) we call “the language of persuasion.”

Brackets []

To enclose explanatory information (but only inside quotation marks).

- Our current system offers us “the same bargain as that offered by Mephistopheles [the devil character in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*].”

To enclose pronoun and verb conversions (inside quotation marks).

- Our eyes have evolved to see in sunlight, so “we've engineered [the night] to receive us by filling it with light.” (“*The night*” was inserted in place of “it.”)
- The blood pressure drops suddenly, and “the nervous system [shoots] acetylcholine into the bloodstream.” (“*Shoots*” was inserted in place of “shot.”)

Ellipses . . .

To indicate deleted words.

- While Blanche Adney nourishes her artistic life through her privacy, “Clare Vawdrey . . . is visible everywhere in every conceivable social situation.” (*The ellipsis has replaced the words “rhyming perhaps not accidentally with ‘tawdry.’”*)

In most cases, lead-in and trail out ellipses are unnecessary.

SUMMARY SHEET, CONTINUED

Italics

To provide emphasis.

- *She* will forgive you.
- She *will* forgive you.
- She will forgive *you*.

With words that refer to words.

- Is *cat* spelled with a *k*?

With foreign expressions.

- *Homo sapiens* first appeared around 195,000 years ago.

To indicate irony.

- The *artist* had placed an empty cardboard box on a pedestal and titled it “Echoes of Love.”

Hyphens –

With compound adjectives.

- The cream came from a grain-fed cow north of Seattle.

But not with –ly adverbs.

- The happily grazing cow . . .

And not when the compound adjective appears to the right of the noun.

- The cow appeared to be grain fed.

SHARED USES

Dashes or Commas

To indicate a pause (the dash for stronger pauses).

- Time marches on, even for children ***dash or comma*** although the pace seems to crawl when they’re young.

With compound sentences.

- I look forward to the unsurpassable joys of staying close to home ***dash or comma*** and that joy is the key here.

With appositives.

- It seems so cruel and unjust to strike a helpless animal ***dash or comma*** a harmless little creature.

Dashes or Parentheses

To distinguish more distinct pauses from the internal-comma pauses.

- Sporting accessories ***dash or parenthesis*** hockey sticks, boxing gloves, a burst football, a pair of sweaty shorts turned inside out ***dash or parenthesis*** lay all over the floor.

To enclose a sentence-within-a-sentence.

- This dignified man ***dash or parenthesis*** he kept his case open for money ***dash or parenthesis*** could not play the mandolin.

Dashes, Parentheses, or Commas

Used to enclose explanatory information.

- None of us ***dash or parenthesis or comma*** whether of barnyard or human society ***dash or parenthesis or comma*** thrives without a sense of belonging.

Dashes or Colons

The list to the right = colon.

- These made up his world ***colon*** the road ahead, the houses and people, the trees and fields that flashed by the windows.

The list to the left (reverse-directional) = dash

- The road ahead, the houses and people, the trees and fields that flashed by the windows ***dash*** these made up his world.

Italics or Quotation Marks

With words that refer to words.

- Is *cat* spelled with a *k*?
- Is “cat” spelled with a “k”?

To indicate irony.

- The *artist* had placed an empty cardboard box on a pedestal and titled it “Echoes of Love.”
- The “artist” had placed an empty cardboard box on a pedestal and titled it “Echoes of Love.”

Punctuation 1: Parentheses

Parentheses contain explanatory information. With parentheses, it is as if writers first create statements in “authorly” voices, then comment on those statements in more personal voices. Some examples:

- Diomed (for once) swept forward.

In this sentence, after stating that Diomed swept forward, the writer would like to insert the more personal comment that this is not what we would normally expect from Diomed; normally Diomed is one of those who hangs back, more concerned about his safety.

Complete sentences can be set apart as parenthetical material, as in the following: *A squirrel chases itself so fast around the trunk of a palm tree that it appears to be standing still, like propeller blades in midflight. (I used to know the cause of this illusion.)*

- The tower (a ruin) sat at the highest point.

In this sentence the main point is where the tower sits—at the highest point. Then there is this secondary, less-important fact (the tower is now a ruin) that the writer wants to pass along to the reader as well. With parenthetical material, we can almost picture writers dropping their voices as they speak, as if what is contained within the parentheses is a secret.

Exercise 1, part 1: Copy each of the following sentences. Place parentheses around the parenthetical material.

1. The best view is from the slaughterhouse quay which now is a market for pets on the right bank. *(The parenthetical material is seven words long.)*
2. Outriggers double boats ride the waves back in as the native warriors did. *(The parenthetical material is two words long.)*
3. And if you give me your address I’ll send you autographed, of course one of my little books of verse. *(The parenthetical material is three words long.)*

Exercise 1, part 2: One test for parenthetical material is that it can be removed from a sentence without affecting the integrity of the sentence. Here in part 2, we’ll demonstrate the “removability” of parenthetical material.

4. Rewrite number 1 from above *without* the parenthetical material.
5. Rewrite number 2 from above *without* the parenthetical material.
6. Rewrite number 3 from above *without* the parenthetical material.

Punctuation 2: Parentheses and the Sentence-Within-a-Sentence

At times parentheses can be optional. Study these examples:

- Diomed, for once, swept forward.
- Diomed (for once) swept forward.
- The tower, a ruin, sat at the highest point.
- The tower (a ruin) sat at the highest point.

From these examples we can see that, at times, commas can perform the job of punctuating parenthetical material just as well as parentheses can. Choosing one over the other simply depends on the desired effect. The commas present the parenthetical material as an integral part of the primary statement; the parentheses present the parenthetical material as more of a whispered and personal afterthought.

Parenthetical material can take its own punctuation—especially if that punctuation is a question mark or an exclamation mark. Note the internal exclamation mark in the following: *We made her face the knitting women sitting on steps in the “May Court” (where a fresh tree was placed each spring by the lawyers’ clerks!) on her way to the guillotine.*

However, there are some situations in which parentheses are more mandatory. One of these is the sentence-within-a-sentence. Examples:

- My junior year American history teacher and newspaper moderator (I was the editor) taught me not just the facts but also how to think about them.
- This desperate, dignified man, transformed by his art and by poverty (he kept his case open for money), could not play the mandolin.

Commas are simply not strong enough to allow us to drop a complete sentence within another complete sentence. Parentheses, however, are strong enough to do the job.

Exercise 2: Copy the following and add parentheses to the following sentence-within-a-sentence sentences. (In #2, be sure to tuck your end-parenthesis inside the comma.)

1. Even if I don’t go away tomorrow I think I certainly shall go and we meet again, don’t say a word more on these subjects.
2. I try to outline the book, not page by page, or point by point I’ve already done that at the back, but as an integrated structure.
3. I walk along the fence of the Place of Justice its name had been changed since the time of the kings past the shadow of Sainte Chapelle.

Punctuation 3: Parentheses and Internal Commas

In the previous lesson we learned that while commas are not up to the task of punctuating a sentence-within-a-sentence, parentheses are. Here in this lesson we'll learn of a second situation (internal commas) in which parentheses are more mandatory.

Let's begin with a sentence:

- To do this, they use specific techniques we call "the language of persuasion."

Now let's add some parenthetical material. Between "techniques" and "we" we'll drop in a list of what those techniques are:

- To do this, they use specific techniques, flattery, repetition, fear, and humor, we call "the language of persuasion."

One common use of parentheses is to explain acronyms, as in the following: *Michael Measure of the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) estimates that at least 100 million birds are killed annually by human structures.*

The problem is that we now have two commas performing the "external" job of showing where the parenthetical statement begins and ends, and three commas performing the "internal" job of separating the items in the series. For the sake of the reader, we try to avoid situations in which commas perform more than one task.

We can solve our problem by converting the external commas to parentheses:

- To do this, they use specific techniques (flattery, repetition, fear, and humor) we call "the language of persuasion."

Here is another example:

- **confusing:** The margins, the top, the bottom, the two sides, are all available.
- **clear:** The margins (the top, the bottom, the two sides) are all available.

Exercise 3: The following sentences contain commas that attempt to perform two separate jobs. Use parentheses to create clearer, more readable versions.

1. As we run up against all of the renewable and non-renewable resource depletions, peak oil, peak soil, peak minerals, etc., that will characterize the foreseeable future, we require an entire rethink as to how we do business. *(Convert two commas to parentheses.)*
2. Politicians and advocacy groups, groups that support a particular belief, point of view, policy, or action, try to persuade us to vote for or support them using whatever means possible. *(Convert two commas to parentheses.)*
3. These "persuaders" use a variety of attention-grabbing techniques, to establish credibility and trust, to stimulate desire for the product or policy, and to motivate us to act, to buy, to vote, to give money. *(Convert one comma to a parenthesis; add a second parenthesis. Be sure to tuck the end-parenthesis inside the period.)*

Punctuation 4: Brackets with Explanatory Information

Parentheses and brackets are like a pair of twins, each performing the same job—with one exception. *What parentheses do outside of quotation marks, brackets do inside quotation marks.*

Example:

- Diomed (for once) swept forward.
- “Diomed [for once] swept forward.”

Though rare, we may encounter situations in which our bracketed material contains parenthetical material. If so, revert back to parentheses. The rule is “parentheses inside brackets inside parentheses inside brackets” and so on.

Because brackets appear inside quotation marks, using them becomes a handy (and necessary) skill when we are engaged in writing an essay. Three common essay-related situations that require brackets are explanatory information, pronoun conversion, and verb conversion. (We will study pronoun and verb conversion in the next lesson.)

Explanatory Information

Whenever we quote, we must be careful to view our quotation from a reader’s point of view. For example, suppose that we are quoting from the essay “Portrait of a Masked Man” by John Berger. Our essay is about Subcomandante Marcos, and we want to say that Marcos will no longer be making public appearances due to the severe “threats to the Zapatista communities and their way of life.”

Though some readers may know who the Zapatistas are, many will not. So we must provide the explanatory information. We get this information either from the essay we are quoting from or from simply doing some research.

Whenever we use quoted words, it is important that we carefully study those words, looking for whatever words or phrases might need to be explained to our readers. But consider that the more educated the audience, the less likely the need for explanation.

Our final version looks like this:

- Subcomandante Marcos will no longer be making public appearances due to the severe “threats to the Zapatista [a group based in Chiapas, Mexico,

that desires to control its own land and resources] communities and their way of life.”

Or suppose we want to quote from “Faustian Economics” by Wendell Berry. We want to say that our current system offers us “the same bargain as that offered by Mephistopheles.” Some (or many) readers will not know who Mephistopheles is, so we must tell them:

- Our current system offers us “the same bargain as that offered by Mephistopheles [the devil character in Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*].”

You may see brackets referred to as “square brackets.” This is usually done in order to distinguish the square brackets [] from angle brackets < >.

Exercise 4: Copy each of the following. Add bracketed explanatory words (underlined) to each. Notes: in numbers 1 and 3, place the bracketed material *inside* the punctuation marks; in number 2, underline the book title (if you are handwriting).

1. With the help of some clever biologists and “the ban on DDT, the peregrine falcon was brought back from the brink of extinction.”
(We will want to explain to our readers what DDT is. DDT is a synthetic insecticide, banned in 1972.)
2. The English novel often requires us to wade through many long, dense passages of description in the same way that “Jane and Dorothea endured their parched lives.”
(We will want to inform readers that Jane and Dorothea are Jane Eyre from the novel of the same name and Dorothea Brooke from *Middlemarch*.)
3. “The Sorcerer, painted fifteen thousand years ago on the cave walls at Les Trois Frères,” provides a perfect image of our admiration for the same animals we hunt down and devour.
(Our readers should know that The Sorcerer is the figure of a man in a deer skin with antlers mounted on his head.)

Punctuation 5: Brackets with Pronoun and Verb Conversions

In the last lesson we learned to be aware that, when our quoted material doesn't contain all the information our readers need, we must supply that information. When our quoted material contains a pronoun—but not the antecedent to that pronoun—we will need to tell our readers who or what the pronoun is referring to.

Suppose we are quoting from “Our Vanishing Night” by Verlyn Klinkenborg, and we want to say that our eyes have evolved to see in sunlight, so “we’ve engineered it to receive us by filling it with light.” Because we have the full original text before us, we know that the “it” we have engineered is “the night.” Our readers will need to know this. So we convert the pronoun to a noun:

- Our eyes have evolved to see in sunlight, so “we’ve engineered [the night] to receive us by filling it with light.”

In the previous exercise we were placing our explanatory information *next to* the appropriate word or phrase—but here we are *replacing* the pronoun with the noun.

Here is a rule to remember: When working within quotation marks, any changes made to the original text—both additions and alterations—need to be indicated with brackets.

So we see that a quoted passage containing one or more pronouns may not be “quotation ready.”

Exercise 5, part 1: Copy each of the following; in each, convert the pronoun to a noun according to the instructions.

1. The sadness we feel when looking at the night sky is because “it has a stony face, while the earth’s face is slaphappy burlesque.” (“It” is “the moon.”)
2. The mansion is so inconceivably large that “it seems as if he had set out to show just how much space a rich man could waste.” (“He” is “the architect.”)

Verbs, like pronouns, may also force us into altering a quotation. If we are writing in the present tense but the passage we are quoting is in the past tense, we must convert the tense—and vice versa. Verbs that are not in the same tense as the tense we are writing in must be converted.

For example, we are writing an essay about fainting (in the present tense), and we find a past-tense passage to quote. Before converting the verb, we have this:

- The blood pressure drops suddenly, and “the nervous system shot acetylcholine into the bloodstream.”

The problem here is that the past tense verb “shot” fails to match the present tense verb “drops.” So we convert the verb:

- The blood pressure drops suddenly, and “the nervous system [shoots] acetylcholine into the bloodstream.”

Though brackets are available to indicate whatever changes might be made to the original words, writers can reduce the need for brackets by considering alternative phrasings that might not require brackets.

Exercise 5, part 2: Copy each of the following; in each, convert verb tenses according to the instructions.

3. Writers know they are meant to write when “the motive to write sent its roots down to the deepest places in their hearts.” (*Make all verbs consistently present tense.*)
4. After this, Dora’s parents decide to send their daughter to Sigmund Freud, “who found meaning in her symptoms, her dreams, and her hesitations.” (*Make all verbs consistently present tense.*)

Punctuation 6: Dashes as Strong Commas

The dash is perhaps the most versatile of all punctuation marks, and before we have finished, we will learn of its many roles. The first function of dashes we will look at is the dash as a comma replacement—when we want something stronger than a comma.

We get little benefit from learning how to use dashes if we do not also learn how to make them while word processing. The formula is **WORD HYPHEN HYPHEN WORD SPACE**. A correctly made dash is a wide mark (—), unlike the much narrower hyphen (-).

Examples:

- Time marches on, even for children—although the pace seems to crawl when they're young.

This sentence might have been punctuated with two commas. But the writer senses that the second pause is stronger than the first, and so uses a dash instead of a comma.

- Some nosing zealot in the Ministry might start wondering why he had been writing during the lunch interval, why he had used an old-fashioned pen, what he had been writing—and then drop a hint in the appropriate quarter.

In this sentence the *why*, *why*, and *what* clauses are parallel and naturally cluster together. Though a comma would have been grammatically correct, the dash more clearly shows that the final word group varies from those that came before.

The examples above are examples of single dashes, but dashes can also be used in pairs. Study the following:

- None of us, whether of barnyard or human society, thrives without a sense of belonging.

- None of us (whether of barnyard or human society) thrives without a sense of belonging.
- None of us—whether of barnyard or human society—thrives without a sense of belonging.

From these examples we can see that there are three ways to punctuate parenthetical material: with commas, with parentheses, and with dashes. Dashes used in pairs are parentheses-like: the first dash indicates where the parenthetical material begins, and the second dash is like an end-dash, closing the parenthetical material.

Exercise 6: Copy each of the following. For numbers 1-2 convert one comma to a dash. Make your dashes nice and wide.

1. Their electronic experiences have led them to expect to see these things happening, all at once and with no effort on their part.
2. She was in the kitchen, not even aware Eric had come in, moving slowly, weighted down, not paying us any attention.

For numbers 3-4 convert two commas to dashes.

3. At the very bottom of the final page, running out of space, he scrawled his name.
4. To date, none of them, from film to television, has lived up to the hype.

For numbers 5-6 convert two parentheses to dashes.

5. Advocates are hoping that the handling of animals in their last hours (even those that exist to die) does matter to us.
6. There was a time after this in which Sir Ector kept telling him to put the sword back into the stone (which he did) and in which Sir Ector and Kay then vainly tried to take it out.

Punctuation 7: Dashes with Compound Sentences

The conventional method for forming the basic compound sentence is *sentence comma conjunction sentence*. Like this:

- I look forward to the unsurpassable joys of staying close to home, and that joy is the key here.

In a compound sentence, the spot just before the conjunction is significant. In most cases the comma before the conjunction gets the job done just fine. But in *some* cases (don't overdo it) we will want a greater and more dramatic pause—so we bring the dash into play.

- I look forward to the unsurpassable joys of staying close to home—and that joy is the key here.

Dashes create strong pauses, and they do so in a variety of situations. As you develop your ear to the cadence of pauses, note also how dashes provide a sense of drama, creating a sense of heightened expectation within readers, who wait expectantly for the material that follows a dash.

Compare, as well, these two examples.

- **satisfactory:** Some of them had come from the banners in the church, some from the waters and the fields about, but all had come to help on account of love.
- **with extra punch:** Some of them had come from the banners in the church, some from the waters and the fields about—but all had come to help on account of love.

Note once again how the dash's lengthy pause helps to accentuate the final clause.

Exercise 7: Copy these two compound sentences. In each, add contrast and drama to the pause just before the conjunction by converting the comma to a dash.

1. A person can sometimes pull such a stunt that afterward he himself won't be able to make heads or tails of his actions, and somebody else, of course, will understand them even less.
2. In the annals of true friendship there are no more honored names than those of Damon and Pythias, for no person can do more than be willing to lay down his life for the sake of his friend.

Punctuation 8: Dashes and Internal Commas

We learned earlier that not all pauses are equal, and that—if at all possible—we should try to arrange our sentences so that each punctuation mark performs only one job.

Often, it is the poor comma that is asked to do more than it should. In such situations, the dash proves quite handy. Here is an example:

- Sporting accessories, hockey sticks, boxing gloves, a burst football, a pair of sweaty shorts turned inside out, lay all over the floor.

This sentence contains a list of items just after the subject “accessories.” The list tells the reader what some of those accessories are. As a result, the five commas are performing two different jobs. The first and fifth commas show us where the list begins and ends; the second, third, and fourth commas separate the items in that list. The end result is confusion for the reader.

So let’s take the job of beginning and ending the list of items away from the two commas that currently serve that function, and hand that job over to a pair of dashes. By doing so, we get this much improved version:

- Sporting accessories—hockey sticks, boxing gloves, a burst football, a pair of sweaty shorts turned inside out—lay all over the floor.

Now, with our improved version, the dashes are *external* to the list, while the three remaining commas are *internal* to the list.

This same principle of *external vs. internal* is at work in the following example, even though only one dash appears:

- Schools are meant to tag the unfit—with poor grades, remedial placement, and other punishments.

Here, the commas are *internal* to the list, while the single dash is *external* to the list.

Exercise 8: Copy each of the following sentences. In numbers 1-3, convert two commas to dashes. In number 4, convert only one comma to a dash.

1. The message of the medium, abstraction, manipulation, control, and power, inevitably influences those who use it.
2. We could encourage the best qualities of youthfulness, curiosity, adventure, resilience, the capacity for surprising insight, simply by giving students the autonomy they need in order to take a risk every now and then.
3. The telescreen, perhaps to celebrate the victory, perhaps to drown out the memory of the lost chocolate, crashed into “Oceania, ’tis for thee.”
4. He kicked on the vacuum and I held tight as the scoop sank into the pillow and moved down its length, once, twice, three times.

Punctuation 9: Ellipses

We are likely to use ellipses while incorporating quotations into our essays. Ellipses (“ellipsis” is the singular form) show the reader that some words from the original quotation have been deleted. Here is an original passage, from “Ghost Writers” by Cynthia Ozick:

- In a story called “The Private Life,” a writer burdened by one of those peculiar Jamesian names, one **Clare Vawdrey, rhyming perhaps not accidentally with “tawdry,” is visible everywhere in every conceivable social situation.**

This is the *complete* passage. Suppose that for an essay we are writing we decide to quote the boldfaced words only. Like this:

- While Blanche Adney nourishes her artistic life through her privacy, **“Clare Vawdrey, rhyming perhaps not accidentally with ‘tawdry,’ is visible everywhere in every conceivable social situation.”**

We see, however, that the medial phrase appearing between the two commas fails to add anything to the point we are making, so we decide that our quotation is better off without these words. Which leaves us with this:

- While Blanche Adney nourishes her artistic life through her privacy, **“Clare Vawdrey . . . is visible everywhere in every conceivable social situation.”**

We don’t want to give our readers the impression that we are more concerned with our word count than with writing well. When we include overly long quoted passages—especially when those passages contain inessential words—we are announcing to the reader that we are “going for the word count.” Using ellipses makes the opposite statement. When a reader—like the instructor grading the essay, for example—sees ellipses, that reader credits the student writer with being more concerned with using only essential words than with trying to pad for word-count purposes.

Typing an Ellipsis

Typing *word space dot dot dot space word* will give us the ellipsis used in general writing, like this: *word ... word*.

But we will want to focus on the more academic ellipsis—like the one used while writing essays in MLA style, for example. Our academic ellipsis is created this way: *word space dot space dot space dot space word*. In other words, spaces occur to the left and right of each “dot,” giving us this format: *word . . . word*. Notice how the “dots” in the academic ellipsis are more spread out than the “dots” in the first example.

Exercise 9: Copy each of the following. For each, remove the boldfaced words and the commas that lie on each side; then insert an ellipsis where the boldfaced words and the two commas once stood.

1. Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, is also, **according to Jerusalem tradition,** the grave of Adam.
2. In the days immediately after my mother’s death, **as its reality slowly overtook my consciousness,** I found myself recalling Robinson Crusoe.
3. He or she may feel, **as the gray-haired scribes of the day continue to take up space and consume the oxygen in the increasingly small room of the print world,** that the elderly have the edge, with their established names and already secured honors.

Punctuation 10: Quoting and Ellipses

In the previous exercise, all of our ellipses occurred in the middle of sentences. But what about “lead-in” and “trail-out” ellipses? To answer this question, let’s look at an example:

- In the days immediately after my mother’s death, **I found myself recalling Robinson Crusoe**, the title character of Daniel Defoe’s 1719 novel.

The decision to quote the boldfaced words presents us with these two options:

- **option A:** Janna Malamud Smith felt compelled to write of her inner turmoil when “. . . [she] found [herself] recalling Robinson Crusoe”
- **option B:** Janna Malamud Smith felt compelled to write of her inner turmoil when “[she] found [herself] recalling Robinson Crusoe.”

The “use ellipses to replace words” rule works in all situations—even with one or more complete sentences. You may replace a complete sentence, a sentence-and-a-half, two sentences, and so on, with ellipses. Such ellipsis usage may require you to use four “dots” instead of three. In other words, you may be required to use an ellipsis-plus-a-period or a period-plus-an-ellipsis. It is important to be clear about which “dots” are parts of an ellipsis and which “dots” are periods.

But which option should we choose? Here are three reasons why option B is the better choice:

1. It is less clumsy, more readable, more reader-friendly.
2. The quotation marks promise the reader “The words appearing between these two quotation marks are taken verbatim from the original text.” They make no promise at all about other words not taken from the original.

3. Lead-in and trail-out ellipses tell readers nothing they didn’t already know: *Of course* there were other words to the left; *of course* there were other words to the right.

Exercise 10: In the previous exercise you practiced the simpler task of removing words and replacing those words with ellipses. In this exercise you will practice the more difficult task of *gracefully blending* quoted words with words of your own.

1. Scientists at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego estimate that there is a 50 percent chance that Lake Mead—the vast reservoir that delivers Colorado River water to tens of millions of people and one million acres of irrigated land—will dry up by 2021.

From the above passage, quote the underlined portion of the passage only. You will need to create the first part of the sentence—the words leading into the word “that”—on your own. Also, replace the two dashes and the words between the two dashes with an ellipsis.

2. If educational institutions hope to compete with the media for students’ attention—and to attract their share of public dollars—they need to devote at least as much serious thought to how they organize their representations as do the media managers who produce a ninety-second TV commercial.

From the above passage, quote the underlined portion of the passage only. You will need to create the first part of the sentence—the words leading into the word “if”—on your own. (Write “if” with a lower-case letter “i.”) Also, replace the two dashes and the words between the two dashes with an ellipsis.

Punctuation 11: Dashes Used as Colons

We use colons when the material to the right of the colon explains the material to the left of the colon. Example:

- Promoters of instructional technology have reverted to a much more modest claim: that the computer is just another tool.

In this sentence, the left-hand material claims that there has been “a much more modest claim”; however, we the readers are left to wonder what that claim might be. The right-hand material then explains for us what exactly the “much more modest claim” is.

This same function can be performed by the dash:

- Promoters of instructional technology have reverted to a much more modest claim—that the computer is just another tool.

Seemingly, we have two methods of achieving the same result. There is, however, a slight difference. The colon is a more formal, serious, and thoughtful mark; the dash is more informal, spontaneous, and dramatic. So the two marks do perform the same function—but each with a different feeling or tone.

Another pair of examples:

- He hardly had the strength for all these chores, but he did have a certain manner: he was always cheerful.
- He hardly had the strength for all these chores, but he did have a certain manner—he was always cheerful.

Exercise 11, part 1: Take the following formal, serious, and thoughtful sentences and convert them to informal, spontaneous, and dramatic sentences. (In other words, copy the complete sentences, but change the colons to dashes.)

1. And that left them sitting ducks for another great invention of the modern era: marketing.
2. Long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands: Big Joe Brady’s restaurant.

Exercise 11, part 2: Take the following informal, spontaneous, and dramatic sentences and convert them to formal, serious, and thoughtful sentences. (In other words, copy the complete sentences, but change the dashes to colons.)

3. Then he took his own clothing and laid it out on the ground in plain sight—the pants, then the coat, the boots, and nearby, the hat.
4. Maybe he can see a bit through that pigment, but it can’t be much—a flicker of light and shade, perhaps.

Punctuation 12: Dashes Used as Reverse-Directional Colons

Most people you stop on the street can tell you that “colons are used with lists.” What these people are referring to is this sentence pattern:

- Sentence: list.

But what few people know is that this same pattern can be reversed—the list can precede the summary sentence. When we do choose to reverse the conventional pattern, the punctuation mark changes to a dash. (This explains the terminology “dash used as a reverse-directional colon.”)

Example:

- **the conventional way, with a colon:** These made up his world: the road ahead, the houses and people, the trees and fields that flashed by the windows.
- **reversed, with a dash:** The road ahead, the houses and people, the trees and fields that flashed by the windows—these made up his world.

Exercise 12: Rewrite each of the following sentences by flip-flopping them. For each, move the list from the end to the beginning. In each case, you will need to use a dash instead of the colon used by the original sentence.

1. All are tied together in this complex web: the consumer products, the cruelty, the pollution, the exploitation, the debasement.
2. It was all a sort of glorious game to them: the songs, the processions, the banners, the drilling with dummy rifles, the yelling of slogans, the worship of Big Brother.
3. These are the places where meaning is genuinely to be found: in families, in friends, in the passage of seasons, in nature, in simple ceremonies and rituals, in curiosity, in generosity, in compassion, and in service to others.

Punctuation 13: Dashes to Create Dramatic Pauses

Up to this point we have encountered a variety of situations for using dashes: as strong commas, with compound sentences, to provide contrast with internal commas, as colons, and as reverse-directional colons.

As it turns out, each of these uses of the dash—as well as others we will study in upcoming lessons—have one thing in common: they create a dramatic pause.

To get a sense of the dramatic pause provided by dashes, compare this sentence:

- **routine:** She will forgive you in the end.

With this:

- **dramatic:** She will forgive you—in the end.

In the second example, you get the sense that the line is delivered by a professional actor. After delivering the word “you,” the actor pauses deeply, stares piercingly into the eyes of another actor, then delivers the final three words in much lower—yet more forceful and meaningful—tones.

Here is another example:

- **routine:** Fifty thousand birds were killed when they followed the beam of a guide light at Warner Robins Air Force Base straight into the ground.
- **dramatic:** Fifty thousand birds were killed when they followed the beam of a guide light at Warner Robins Air Force Base—straight into the ground.

Exercise 13: Copy the following sentences. In each, add a strategically placed dash that lends the sentence’s final words with some extra drama. In one sentence leave two words to the right of the dash; leave four in another, five in another, and six in another.

1. Suddenly he gave a startled cry and pointed at the wolf hair!
2. What happened to send Emily Dickinson to her room for life?
3. These Apaches liked to stake a man out on an anthill and let the hot sun and ants do him in, or maybe the buzzards if they got there soon enough.
4. Children are to be sorted by role and trained only so far as their destination in the social machine merits and not one step further.

Punctuation 14: Italics for Emphasis

Italicized letters are *slanted* letters. They can only be used while typing; while handwriting (with a pen or pencil), we use underlining. Italicized letters equal underlined letters, and underlined letters equal italicized letters. It just depends on whether we're using a computer screen or a sheet of paper.

One quite common use of italics is to indicate titles of book-length texts, as in *The Lord of the Flies*.

All sentences have their own cadences, their own music. We hear these sounds as we compose sentences. We hear our own voice accenting certain syllables, rising and falling in pitch, and pausing strategically.

Unfortunately, our readers may not hear the same sounds that we do. And since written prose is not accompanied by musical notation, it is often difficult to pass our idea of a sentence's musicality onto our readers.

We do, however, have a few tools at our disposal. One such tool is the option of italicizing. Italicized words and phrases are meant to be read with emphasis—with added force, vigor, and volume.

Study these examples:

- She will forgive you. (*straightforward*)
- She will forgive you. (*not any of those other people over there*)
- She *will* forgive you. (*you can count on it*)
- She will *forgive* you. (*forgiveness! just think of it*)
- She will forgive *you*. (*not any of those other people over there*)

Italics are the correct—and the *only* correct—way to show that a word or phrase should be emphasized. We often encounter everything else: boldface, all caps, extra exclamation marks, underlining, or a combination of these. But when we want to show emphasis, each of these choices is incorrect. *Only italics show emphasis.*

Exercise 14: Copy each of the following sentences. *If you are word processing, use italics; but you are probably handwriting, in which case underline the word or words you would otherwise have italicized.* Use the italicized, parenthetical words as clues for what to italicize.

1. I walk along the fence of the Place of Justice. (*Most people crawl.*)
2. Michael Measure estimates that at least 100 million birds are killed annually by human structures. (*The number of birds is shocking.*)
3. As we run up against all of the renewable and non-renewable resource depletions, we require an entire rethink as to how we do business. (*A partial rethink just won't do.*)
4. Whenever we quote, we must be careful to view our quotation from a reader's point of view. (*Not from our own point of view.*)
5. Then he took his own clothing and laid it out on the ground in plain sight. (*We had expected him to use someone else's clothing.*)

Punctuation 15: Words Referring to Words

When words are used to refer to words, we have two options: italics or quotation marks.

It is true that either italics or quotation marks can perform the task of marking words that refer to words. The key is to be consistent. Once you decide to use italics for this job, continue to use italics. If you decide to use quotation marks, continue to use quotation marks.

Now the first question we might ask is “Don’t *all* words refer to words?” The answer is No.

Take the word *cat*, for example. The word *cat* refers to a four-legged feline. Suppose someone asks, “Have you seen my cat?” You wouldn’t answer, “No. In fact, I haven’t even seen a *C*, let alone an *A* or a *T*.” Of course, the cat-owner asking for your assistance isn’t asking you if you’ve seen a *C*, an *A*, and a *T*. The cat-owner is asking you if you’ve seen a four-legged feline.

In other words, words point elsewhere, not to themselves. The word *cat* points to an animal, not to the three letters it is made of.

But when we *are* referring to the physical word itself—the letters the word is made of—we mark that word with italics or quotation marks.

Each of the examples below is correct:

- Have you seen my cat?
- Is *cat* spelled with a *k*?
- Is “cat” spelled with a “k”?

Exercise 15: Copy each of the sentences below. Italicize words or letters that refer to words or letters. If you are handwriting—which you probably are—use underlining to indicate that, if word processed, the underlined words and letters would be italicized.

1. Even the word massacre is a bit of an exaggeration.
2. In stanza four, sun and gone provide an example of slant rhyme.

Now let’s practice using our other option. Copy the following sentences. Place quotation marks around words or letters that refer to words or letters.

3. If there is one word that can describe its voice, it is the word authentic.
4. The e in err should be pronounced like the e in her.

Punctuation 16: Foreign Expressions and Irony

Italicize foreign expressions.

We italicize foreign words and phrases—even many of those that have found their way into English dictionaries.

Examples:

- On what is normally my typing table there is a bowl of hot *glügg*.
- Our species—*homo sapiens*—first appeared as a biologically recognizable entity around 195,000 years ago.
- “You have a nice *multiflora cineraria* there,” she remarked as she walked ahead down the hall of closed doors.

Exercise 16, part 1: For each of the following, write only those words that should be italicized. Italicize these words if you are word processing; underline them if you are writing by hand.

1. They construct a long, water-permeable barrier known as a makhloba.
2. This little lodge, these rocks, the water, the fire—these are sacred, these we will use from now on as we have done here for the first time: for purification, for life, for wichosani, for health.
3. He looked up at the group of big brown boys on the rock and shouted, “Bonjour! Merci! Au revoir! Monsieur, monsieur!” while he hooked his fingers round his ears and waggled them.

Use quotation marks to indicate irony.

We use quotation marks to give an ironic twist to certain words and phrases. We might also think of ironic quotation marks as marks that tell the reader that certain words are only “so-called,” or “their words, not mine.”

Although italics *can* be used to indicate irony, quotation marks are the more common choice.

This function of quotation marks has both a noble and a petty purpose. When used more nobly, these marks indicate to the reader, “Look, just because these people call it this, you and I, dear reader, are under no obligation to do so.” And this is quite true. If a word is used inaccurately, we are under no obligation to use the word inaccurately ourselves.

These quotation marks—quotation marks used to indicate irony—are also known as “scare quotes.”

The petty use of ironic quotation marks is quite similar to “air quotes,” as in *Oh, you’re quite the comedian.* Here you can imagine the speaker waxing ever so sarcastic while flexing a pair of fingers, one on each side of the ironic person’s head.

Exercise 16, part 2: This time write the complete sentences. Place quotation marks around any ironic words or phrases. Look to the parenthetical clues for assistance.

4. The essay that is considered literature in our day is not an ambitious or impassioned analysis of human nature. (*The writer does not really agree that this sort of essay qualifies as literature.*)
5. Most of the luxuries and many of the comforts of life are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. (*Other people may think of these things as comforts, but this writer doesn’t agree one bit.*)
6. The vast majority of research turned out in the modern university is essentially worthless, resulting in no measurable benefit to anything or anybody. (*Those at the university may call it research, but not this writer.*)

Punctuation 17: Dashes and the Sentence-Within-a-Sentence

We will now hearken way back to lesson 2. In lesson 2 we learned how parentheses can be used to punctuate the sentence-within-a-sentence. We will now see how dashes can be used to accomplish the same task.

Here are two sentences:

- **first sentence:** Born to humble parents Arachne was put to work on the loom as a young girl.
- **second sentence:** Her father was a dyer of wool.

Because the second sentence relates to the “humble parents” of the first sentence, we decide to move the second sentence inside the first sentence, just after the word “parents.” The only punctuation marks that can help us to achieve this sentence-within-a-sentence maneuver are parentheses and dashes.

Here is our final result, with dashes.

- **sentence-within-a-sentence:** Born to humble parents—her father was a dyer of wool—Arachne was put to work on the loom as a young girl.

One more example:

- **first sentence:** Winston had never been able to feel sure whether O’Brien was a friend or an enemy.
- **second sentence:** Even after this morning’s flash of the eyes it was still impossible to be sure.
- **sentence-within-a-sentence:** Winston had never been able to feel sure—even after this morning’s flash of the eyes it was still impossible to be sure—whether O’Brien was a friend or an enemy.

Exercise 17: For each of the following, use dashes to insert the second sentence within the first sentence. Write out the complete, sentence-within-a-sentence version of each answer.

1. **first sentence:** Alyosha was a skinny little fellow, lop-eared and with a large nose.
second sentence: His ears stuck out like wings.
2. **first sentence:** This is caused by the people who routinely manage, by careful placement, to block the entire aisle with a shopping cart.
second sentence: And you just know these are the same people who drive slowly in the left-hand lane.
3. **first sentence:** And we threw all our snowballs into the smoke and ran out of the house to the telephone box.
second sentence: I think we missed Mr. Prothero.

Punctuation 18: Dashes Used as Parentheses

We often use the term “parenthetical material” to refer to words, phrases, or clauses inserted within complete sentences. And, as we would expect, parenthetical material is often enclosed within parentheses.

However, dashes can also perform the work of parentheses—as we have seen earlier.

It should also be noted that the choice between parentheses and dashes is not an arbitrary one. Though they can be grammatical equals, the two marks differ in the tone or emphasis they lend the parenthetical material.

With parentheses we are meant to take the parenthetical material and to bring it down a notch, as if we are whispering from behind our hand; with dashes, we are meant to read the parenthetical material at the same level as the primary sentence—or possibly even with extra emphasis.

Examples:

- **the parenthetical material is a bit subdued:** This sometimes happens when the cornea (the front of the eyeball) has been inflamed over a long period, and it is very difficult to treat.
- **the parenthetical material is not a bit subdued:** This sometimes happens when the cornea—the front of the eyeball—has been inflamed over a long period, and it is very difficult to treat.

Exercise 18: This exercise is similar to exercise 17. The only difference is that the added, parenthetical material is less than a complete sentence. For each, use dashes to insert the parenthetical material into the first sentence. Write out the complete version of each answer.

1. **primary sentence:** He married Beauty, and lived with her many years, and their happiness was complete.
parenthetical material: as it was founded on virtue
2. **primary sentence:** Damon hastened straightaway to the palace and gladly offered to be held hostage for his friend.
parenthetical material: much to the amazement of King Dionysius
3. **primary sentence:** I think somebody may care for Myron as we cared for Aunt Leora.
parenthetical material: perhaps his brother, Andrew

Punctuation 19: Hyphens with Compound Adjectives

The hyphen can perform a variety of duties. We use hyphens with numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine, to reduce confusion in otherwise confusing letter combinations (“recreation” vs. “re-creation”), and with certain prefixes (“self-sufficient”).

Remember, a hyphen is not a dash. While word processing, hyphens are made by hitting the hyphen key one time only. Hyphens and dashes do not perform the same duties.

We, however, will study only one use of the hyphen: to hyphenate compound adjectives.

The **suspension hyphen** provides us with a handy shortcut. Example: You might want to mention your *sixth-grade or seventh-grade* teacher. But with the suspension hyphen, you need only write *sixth- or seventh-grade* teacher. The suspension hyphen can be used even with words that are not hyphenated:
You may throw over- or underhand.

Study these examples:

- **example 1:** The cream came from a **happy cow** in the lowlands north of Seattle.
- **example 2:** The cream came from a **grain-fed cow** in the lowlands north of Seattle.

“Cow” is a noun. In example 1, the word to the left of the cow is an adjective, describing the cow. What kind of cow is it? A *happy cow*.

In example 2 the two words “grain” and “fed” combine together to make a compound adjective. What kind of cow is it? A *grain-fed cow*.

Because the words “grain” and “fed” work together as if they were a single adjective (just as “happy” is a single adjective), we hyphenate the two words.

More examples:

- an **intelligent-looking** woman
- **pollution-free** alternatives
- a **gray-haired** news anchor
- **red-blooded** Americans
- a **plastic-and-steel** coffee maker

Note that the “plastic-and-steel” combination gives us a three-word compound adjective. Because compound adjectives can be created from scratch, they provide an area of great potential creativity, allowing us to construct extremely long compound adjectives should we so desire, as in “This caused me to experience **way-too-many-product-choices** rage.”

Exercise 19:

1. **sentence 1:** According to scientific sounding literature, the Contour Points take advantage of reflexology.
(1a) Find the compound adjective in sentence 1; write it with a hyphen. (1b) The compound adjective is modifying what noun?
2. **sentence 2:** I would hate to think that my work as a writer could not be done without a dependence on strip mined coal.
(2a) Find the compound adjective in sentence 2; write it with a hyphen. (2b) The compound adjective is modifying what noun?
3. **sentence 3:** That’s not necessarily bad, but you will note a certain similarity of content among chain owned papers.
(3a) Find the compound adjective in sentence 3; write it with a hyphen. (3b) The compound adjective is modifying what noun?
4. **sentence 4:** Some foodstuffs can’t be broken down by the digestive enzymes and are used by the gas producing bacteria instead.
(4a) Find the compound adjective in sentence 4; write it with a hyphen. (4b) The compound adjective is modifying what noun?

Punctuation 20: Canceling Hyphens

In the previous lesson we learned to hyphenate compound adjectives. In this lesson we will learn two exceptions to that rule:

- ❖ **exception 1:** *following an –ly adverb*
- ❖ **exception 2:** *the compound adjective appears to the right of the noun*

exception 1: FOLLOWING AN –LY ADVERB

Study this sentence:

- The **totally-vulnerable** tourist depended on the kindness of strangers.

In this example, “tourist” is a noun. To the left of “tourist,” it appears that we have the compound adjective “totally-vulnerable.” But a closer inspection tells us that this is not the case. In reality, “totally” is an –ly adverb modifying the adjective “vulnerable.”

When the left-hand word of what appears to be a compound adjective is actually an –ly adverb, we cancel the hyphen. The corrected version looks like this:

- The **totally vulnerable** tourist . . .

Here are two more hyphenless examples:

- The **occasionally frightened** children worked silently.
- Evelyn did not know what to do with her **recently acquired** ranch.

Exercise 20, part 1: In the following sentences, locate the adverb-adjective-noun combination. Write those three words only, without the hyphen.

1. This is a totally-different philosophy.
2. The horse was unsteady due to his drastically-limited vision.
3. Zeke had lost control of his normally-reliable curveball.

exception 2: THE COMPOUND ADJECTIVE APPEARS TO THE RIGHT OF THE NOUN

In exercise 19, we encountered this sentence:

- The cream came from a **grain-fed** cow in the lowlands north of Seattle.

In that lesson, we learned to hyphenate compound adjectives. In this case the words “grain” and “fed” work together, as if they were a single adjective.

However, when we move those same words *to the right* of the noun they modify, we cancel the hyphen.

- **with a hyphen:** The cream came from a **grain-fed** cow.
- **without a hyphen:** The cream came from a cow that is **grain fed**.

In both examples above, the words “grain” and “fed” describe the cow. But in the first version, “grain-fed” appears to the left of “cow” and is therefore hyphenated; in the second version “grain fed” appears to the right of “cow” and is therefore hyphenless.

Some more examples:

- the **intelligent-looking** man, *but*
- the man is **intelligent looking**
- a **plastic-and-steel** coffee maker, *but*
- a coffee maker made of **plastic and steel**

Exercise 20, part 2: Each of the following sentences contains a hyphenated compound adjective appearing to the left of the noun it modifies. Rewrite each so that the compound adjective appears to the right of the noun—underlined, *with no hyphen*.

4. According to scientific-sounding literature, the Contour Points take advantage of reflexology.
5. I would hate to think that my work as a writer could not be done without a dependence on strip-mined coal.
6. You will note a certain similarity of content among chain-owned papers.

Punctuation 21: Dashes to Emphasize Repeated Words and Contrasting Statements

WITH REPEATED WORDS

At times the strategic repetition of a word or words can lend some style to our writing. The problem is that punctuating two appearances of the same word or words can be a little tricky. This is where the dash comes in.

In the following examples, the repeated words are in boldface:

- I'm **better** than that—**better** than I was before.
- Ahead of us now is only one more **hump**—the last **hump**.
- I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was **something** new to me in those eyes—**something** known only to her and to the mountain.

WITH CONTRASTING STATEMENTS

We have seen how dashes work well to distinguish one appearance of a word from a second appearance of the same word; now we will see how dashes also work well in the exact opposite situation.

As we write, we find that there are some concepts that can best be expressed by telling not only how it is, but also how it's not. Because the distinction between an "it's this way" statement and an "it's *not* this way" statement is such a sharp one, dashes are often the best choice for punctuating such distinctions.

Example:

- The *hors d'oeuvres* were bowls of cherry tomatoes and carrot sticks, grown by local gardeners—no brownies from a box, no cheese sticks.

Note how the dash sits between what *is* there and what's *not* there—providing a strong, clear, distinct break between the two opposed statements.

Here are two more examples:

- You could fry an egg on those rocks by ten in the morning—not that he had any eggs.
- I know that he will certainly return before the appointed time—unless, of course, he dies or is held captive by some evil force.

Exercise 21: For each of the following, copy the complete sentence and add repeated words or a contrasting phrase according to the instructions. In each case, underline the added words.

1. Inglis breaks down the purpose of modern schooling into six basic functions.
(Add the words "the actual purpose" [repeated words] to the sentence above, with two dashes.)
2. Electricity is sold at a discount to the aluminum industry in the Pacific Northwest.
(Add the words "electricity that comes from dams that were built at the public's expense" [repeated words] to the sentence above, with one dash.)
3. According to this argument, if taxes are raised, the state's economy will be ruined.
(Add the words "not a likely scenario, given the size of the proposed increase" [contrasting phrase] to the sentence above, with one dash.)
4. This is the most overlooked aspect of a successful suspension policy.
(Add the words "yet most important" [contrasting phrase] to the sentence above, with two dashes.)

Punctuation 22: Dashes with Appositives

In the previous lesson we observed that, when we choose to repeat words, dashes help us to draw a clear distinction between the first occurrence of a word and the second. In the same way, dashes are commonly used with appositives.

An appositive is another name for a noun, another way of saying the same thing. So though appositives are not *exactly* the same word, they are the next closest thing.

Example:

- It seems so cruel and unjust to strike a helpless animal—a harmless little creature.

In this example we have “a helpless animal” followed by “a harmless little creature.” In order to understand what an appositive is, we must see that the “harmless little creature” *is* the “helpless animal.” *They are two ways of saying the same thing.* “A harmless little creature” is the appositive for “a helpless animal.”

Here are a couple more examples.

- I fear what this choir—the one I attempt to sing in—actually looks like.
(“The one I attempt to sing in” is the appositive for “this choir.”)
- He was a mass of imbecile enthusiasms—one of those completely unquestioning drudges on whom the stability of the Party depended.
(“One of those completely unquestioning drudges on whom the stability of the Party depended” is the appositive for “he.”)

Exercise 22, part 1: For each of the following, copy the complete sentence and add appositives according to the instructions.

1. These otherwise nice young men lobbied me so hard to approve their major project proposal that I finally relented just to see if they intended to follow through.
(Add the words “breaking through the school’s network security” [an appositive] to the sentence above, with two dashes.)
2. Repetition of blows produced a series of regular horizontal folds in Mr. Coyote’s body tissues.
(Add the words “a rare and painful condition that caused Mr. Coyote to expand upward and contract downward alternately as he walked” [an appositive] to the sentence above, with one dash.)

Exercise 22, part 2: Copy the following sentences; add appositives and dashes according to the directions given.

3. Third, there is the danger that education will damage the sense of wonder that is part of our original equipment at birth.
(Create an appositive of your own; place it after the word “wonder,” with two dashes. Underline your appositive.)
4. Across the country, there are thousands of brownfields.
(Create an appositive of your own; place it after the word “brownfields,” with one dash. Underline your appositive.)

Punctuation 23: Shared Duties

Over the course of the 22 previous lessons, we have been studying the functions of the various punctuation marks. Several of these functions—or duties—can be fulfilled by more than one punctuation mark.

As writers, we need to understand when we have choices available. The more we are aware of our options, the more various and wide-ranging our sentence constructions will be.

- **function:** a pause
- **choices:** commas for normal pauses; dashes for stronger pauses

- **function:** the pause before the conjunction in a compound sentence
- **choices:** commas for normal pauses; dashes for stronger pauses

- **function:** pauses that accompany appositives
- **choices:** commas for normal pauses; dashes for stronger pauses

- **function:** distinguishing external pauses from internal-comma pauses.
- **choices:** dashes or parentheses

- **function:** to enclose a sentence-within-a-sentence
- **choices:** dashes or parentheses

- **function:** to enclose explanatory or parenthetical information
- **choices:** commas, dashes, or parentheses

- **function:** to indicate that the following (right-hand) information explains the previous (left-hand) information
- **choices:** colons or dashes

- **function:** to separate a list from a general statement
- **choices:** colons when the list is on the right; dashes (reverse-directional) when the list is on the left

- **function:** to indicate words used as words
- **choices:** italics or quotation marks

- **function:** to indicate irony
- **choices:** italics or quotation marks

Exercise 23: (Asterisks are the star-looking marks [*]).

Here is your word bank: *colons, commas, dashes, italics, parentheses, quotation marks.*

1. Corporations privatize the commonwealth * the water, the forests, the labor * for profit and externalize as many of the costs as possible, passing them on to communities, workers, and nonhuman species. (Which two punctuation marks could replace the asterisks?)
2. During a 20-minute conversation, however, he displayed a vocabulary that consisted mostly of one word: cool. (What should be done with the last word of the sentence? Choose two from the word bank.)
3. Eric and I had always been pretty much the same * even-tempered and sensible. (Which two punctuation marks could replace the asterisk?)
4. It includes the poems generally considered great * and they are many. (Which two punctuation marks could replace the asterisk?)
5. It took 100 beans to make this perfect cup of coffee * about one fortieth of the beans that grew on the coffee tree that year. (Which two punctuation marks could replace the asterisk?)
6. Lavinia * while not the sharpest tool in the shed * luckily had the good sense to ignore the instructions Emily had left in her will. (Which three punctuation marks could replace the asterisks?)
7. Lying in ruins before you, you can see the ancient castle * a castle with great and high-ceilinged rooms. (Which two punctuation marks could replace the asterisk?)
8. Teach your children what we have taught our children * that the earth is our mother. (Which two punctuation marks could replace the asterisk?)
9. There wasn't a single abnormality in the eyelids * I had wondered if I had missed something last time * but as the bright sunshine slanted across the eyeballs, I could just discern the faintest cloudiness in the cornea. (Which two punctuation marks could replace the asterisks?)

Practice Test

Part 1: Matching. The following sentences need which punctuation? (In some of the sentences, asterisks have been placed to mark the spot(s) where punctuation is needed.)

1. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes * something known only to her and to the mountain. [sentence A]
2. I walk along the fence of the Place of Justice its name had been changed since the time of the kings past the shadow of Sainte Chapelle. [B]
3. They had come from the banners in the church or from the waters and the fields about * but all had come to help on account of love. [C]
4. The consumer products, the cruelty, the pollution, the exploitation, the debasement * all are tied together in this complex web. [D]
5. I fear what this choir the one I attempt to sing in actually looks like. [E]
6. We could encourage the best qualities of youthfulness * curiosity, adventure, resilience, the capacity for surprising insight * simply by giving students the autonomy they need. [AB]
7. You could fry an egg on those rocks by ten in the morning * not that he had any eggs. [AC]
8. All are tied together in this complex web * the consumer products, the cruelty, the pollution, the exploitation, the debasement.
9. Evelyn did not know what to do with her recently acquired ranch.
10. Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, is also * the grave of Adam. (*Before being removed, the words "according to Jerusalem tradition" appeared where the asterisk now stands.*)
11. He hardly had the strength for all these chores, but he did have a certain manner * he was always cheerful.
12. If there is one word that can describe its voice, it is the word authentic.
13. You have a nice multiflora cineraria there.
14. Subcomandante Marcos will no longer be making public appearances due to the severe "threats to the Zapatista * a group based in Chiapas * and his concern for his own safety."
15. The gray haired news anchor gazed calmly into the camera.
16. The news anchor is gray haired.
17. The sadness we feel when looking at the night sky is because "the moon has a stony face, while the earth's face is slaphappy burlesque." (*For the sake of the reader, the original word "it" was changed to "the moon."*)
18. Whenever we quote, we must be careful to view our quotation from a reader's point of view. (*We want to emphasize that we must not view our quotation from our own point of view.*)

Matching

The marks are listed as plural, though needing only one is entirely possible. The number inside the parentheses is the number of times the answer gets used in numbers 1-18.

- a. brackets (2)
- b. colons (1)
- c. colons or dashes (1)
- d. commas or dashes (1)
- e. commas, dashes, parentheses (1)
- ab. dashes (3)
- ac. dashes or parentheses (2)
- ad. do nothing (2)
- ae. ellipses (1)
- bc. hyphens (1)
- bd. italics (2)
- be. italics or quotation marks (1)

Part 2: Sentence Types

This section, too, is matching. Using only sentences number 1-7, match the description below to the correct sentence. For matching purposes, use the bracketed letters. Each gets used once.

19. Compound sentence
20. Contains an appositive
21. Contrast
22. External pauses in conflict with internal commas
23. Repeated word or words
24. Reverse-directional
25. Sentence-within-a-sentence

Final Test

Part 1: Matching. The following sentences need which punctuation? (In some of the sentences, asterisks have been placed to mark the spot(s) where punctuation is needed.)

1. She acted like she'd gained all the weight Eric had lost * not on her body, because she was long and lanky, but inside her head. [sentence A]
2. "Goodbye," said the Wart for the last time * and the poor fellow went quickly out of the room. [B]
3. Confusion, class position, indifference, emotional and intellectual dependency, conditional self-esteem, surveillance * all of these lessons are prime training for permanent underclasses. [C]
4. Hardly a week passed in which the Times did not carry a paragraph describing how some eavesdropping little sneak * "child hero" was the phrase generally used * had denounced his parents to the Thought Police. [D]
5. Mrs. Joe * the wife of the blacksmith * felt that the difficulty of raising Pip was too much to bear. [E]
6. It seemed that every part of the clutter had a history * sometimes a history that remembered the origin of the earth. [AB]
7. Yet these projects * the steady diet of virtual trips to the Antarctic, virtual climbs to the summit of Mount Everest, and trips into cyber-orbit that represent one technological high after another * generate only vicarious thrills. [AC]
8. I will not leave my money to you worthless layabouts! (*The speaker is emphasizing that, if other people want to leave their money, that's just fine.*)
9. Long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands * Big Joe Brady's restaurant.
10. Our current system offers us "the same bargain as that offered by Mephistopheles * the devil character in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* *."
11. The problem is particularly * severe when the weather is bad.
12. They use the word reform, and they try so hard to act as if they really mean it.
13. This coffee maker is steel * plated.
14. "Una momento," said the guide, as he examined the gray hills off in the distance.
15. You'd be better off with the plastic and steel coffee maker.

16. We live in denial of death, which * is not really living at all. (*Before being removed, the words "in Heidegger's opinion" appeared where the asterisk now stands.*)
17. Writers know they are meant to write when "the motive to write sends its roots down to the deepest places in their hearts." (*The verb "sent" was changed to "sends" in order to conform to the present tense.*)
18. We found dogs sleeping in every room of the house * spaniels, Airedales, bulldogs, collies, and a Great Dane.

Matching

The marks are listed as plural, though needing only one is entirely possible. The number inside the parentheses is the number of times the answer gets used in numbers 1-18.

- a. brackets (2)
- b. colons (1)
- c. colons or dashes (1)
- d. commas or dashes (1)
- e. commas, dashes, parentheses (1)
- ab. dashes (3)
- ac. dashes or parentheses (2)
- ad. do nothing (2)
- ae. ellipses (1)
- bc. hyphens (1)
- bd. italics (2)
- be. italics or quotation marks (1)

Part 2: Sentence Types

This section, too, is matching. Using only sentences number 1-7, match the description below to the correct sentence. For matching purposes, use the bracketed letters. Each gets used once.

19. Compound sentence
20. Contains an appositive
21. Contrast
22. External pauses in conflict with internal commas
23. Repeated word or words
24. Reverse-directional
25. Sentence-within-a-sentence

ANSWER KEYS

Punctuation 1—Introduction

Exercise 1, part 1:

1. The best view is from the slaughterhouse quay (which now is a market for pets) on the right bank.
2. Outriggers (double boats) ride the waves back in as the native warriors did.
3. And if you give me your address I'll send you (autographed, of course) one of my little books of verse.

Exercise 1, part 2:

4. The best view is from the slaughterhouse quay on the right bank.
5. Outriggers ride the waves back in as the native warriors did.
6. And if you give me your address I'll send you one of my little books of verse.

Punctuation 2: Parentheses and the Sentence-Within-a-Sentence

Exercise 2:

1. Even if I don't go away tomorrow (I think I certainly shall go) and we meet again, don't say a word more on these subjects.
2. I try to outline the book, not page by page, or point by point (I've already done that at the back), but as an integrated structure.
3. I walk along the fence of the Place of Justice (its name had been changed since the time of the kings) past the shadow of Sainte Chapelle.

Punctuation 3: Parentheses and Internal Commas

Exercise 3:

1. As we run up against all of the renewable and non-renewable resource depletions (peak oil, peak soil, peak minerals, etc.) that will characterize the foreseeable future, we require an entire rethink as to how we do business.
2. Politicians and advocacy groups (groups that support a particular belief, point of view, policy, or action) try to persuade us to vote for or support them using whatever means possible.
3. These "persuaders" use a variety of attention-grabbing techniques (to establish credibility and trust, to stimulate desire for the product or policy, and to motivate us to act, to buy, to vote, to give money).

Punctuation 4: Brackets with Explanatory Information

Exercise 4:

1. With the help of some clever biologists and "the ban on DDT [a synthetic insecticide, banned in 1972], the peregrine falcon was brought back from the brink of extinction."
2. The English novel often requires us to wade through many long, dense passages of description in the same way that "Jane and Dorothea [Jane Eyre from the novel of the same name and Dorothea Brooke from *Middlemarch*] endured their parched lives."
3. "The Sorcerer [the figure of a man in a deer skin with antlers mounted on his head], painted fifteen thousand years ago on the cave walls at Les Trois Frères," provides a perfect image of our admiration for the same animals we hunt down and devour.

Punctuation 5: Brackets with Pronoun and Verb Conversions

Exercise 5, part 1:

1. The sadness we feel when looking at the night sky is because “[**the moon**] has a stony face, while the earth’s face is slaphappy burlesque.”
2. The mansion is so inconceivably large that “it seems as if [**the architect**] had set out to show just how much space a rich man could waste.”

Exercise 5, part 2:

3. Writers know they are meant to write when “the motive to write [**sends**] its roots down to the deepest places in their hearts.”
4. After this, Dora’s parents decide to send their daughter to Sigmund Freud, “who [**finds**] meaning in her symptoms, her dreams, and her hesitations.”

Punctuation 6: Dashes as Strong Commas

Exercise 6:

1. Their electronic experiences have led them to expect to see these things happening—all at once and with no effort on their part.
2. She was in the kitchen, not even aware Eric had come in—moving slowly, weighted down, not paying us any attention.
3. At the very bottom of the final page—running out of space—he scrawled his name.
4. To date, none of them—from film to television—has lived up to the hype.
5. Advocates are hoping that the handling of animals in their last hours—even those that exist to die—does matter to us.
6. There was a time after this in which Sir Ector kept telling him to put the sword back into the stone—which he did—and in which Sir Ector and Kay then vainly tried to take it out.

Punctuation 7: Dashes with Compound Sentences

Exercise 7:

1. A person can sometimes pull such a stunt that afterward he himself won’t be able to make heads or tails of his actions—and somebody else, of course, will understand them even less.
2. In the annals of true friendship there are no more honored names than those of Damon and Pythias—for no person can do more than be willing to lay down his life for the sake of his friend.

Punctuation 8: Dashes and Internal Commas

Exercise 8:

1. The message of the medium—abstraction, manipulation, control, and power—inevitably influences those who use it.
2. We could encourage the best qualities of youthfulness—curiosity, adventure, resilience, the capacity for surprising insight—simply by giving students the autonomy they need in order to take a risk every now and then.
3. The telescreen—perhaps to celebrate the victory, perhaps to drown out the memory of the lost chocolate—crashed into “Oceania, ’tis for thee.”
4. He kicked on the vacuum and I held tight as the scoop sank into the pillow and moved down its length—once, twice, three times.

Punctuation 9: Ellipses

Exercise 9:

1. Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, is also . . . the grave of Adam.
2. In the days immediately after my mother's death . . . I found myself recalling Robinson Crusoe.
3. He or she may feel . . . that the elderly have the edge, with their established names and already secured honors.

Punctuation 10: Quoting and Ellipses

Exercise 10: [suggested answers]

1. **Before you go out and buy yourself a house boat, consider** "that there is a 50 percent chance that Lake Mead . . . will dry up by 2021."
2. **Too many university presidents fail to take into account that** "if educational institutions hope to compete with the media for students' attention . . . they need to devote at least as much serious thought to how they organize their representations as do the media managers."

Punctuation 11: Dashes Used as Colons

Exercise 11, part 1:

1. And that left them sitting ducks for another great invention of the modern era—marketing.
2. Long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands—Big Joe Brady's restaurant.

Exercise 11, part 2:

3. Then he took his own clothing and laid it out on the ground in plain sight: the pants, then the coat, the boots, and nearby, the hat.
4. Maybe he can see a bit through that pigment, but it can't be much: a flicker of light and shade, perhaps.

Punctuation 12: Dashes Used as Reverse-Directional Colons

Exercise 12:

1. The consumer products, the cruelty, the pollution, the exploitation, the debasement—all are tied together in this complex web.
2. The songs, the processions, the banners, the drilling with dummy rifles, the yelling of slogans, the worship of Big Brother—it was all a sort of glorious game to them.
3. In families, in friends, in the passage of seasons, in nature, in simple ceremonies and rituals, in curiosity, in generosity, in compassion, and in service to others—these are the places where meaning is genuinely to be found.

Punctuation 13: Dashes to Create Dramatic Pauses

Exercise 13:

1. Suddenly he gave a startled cry and pointed—at the wolf hair!
2. What happened to send Emily Dickinson to her room—for life?
3. These Apaches liked to stake a man out on an anthill and let the hot sun and ants do him in, or maybe the buzzards—if they got there soon enough.
4. Children are to be sorted by role and trained only so far as their destination in the social machine merits—and not one step further.

Punctuation 14: Italics for Emphasis

Exercise 14:

1. I *walk* along the fence of the Place of Justice.
2. Michael Mesure estimates that at least *100 million* birds are killed annually by human structures.
3. As we run up against all of the renewable and non-renewable resource depletions, we require an *entire* rethink as to how we do business.
4. Whenever we quote, we must be careful to view our quotation from a *reader's* point of view.
5. Then he took his *own* clothing and laid it out on the ground in plain sight.

Punctuation 15: Words Referring to Words

Exercise 15:

1. Even the word *massacre* is a bit of an exaggeration.
2. In stanza four, *sun* and *gone* provide an example of slant rhyme.
3. If there is one word that can describe its voice, it is the word “authentic.”
4. The “e” in “err” should be pronounced like the “e” in “her.”

Punctuation 16: Foreign Expressions and Irony

Exercise 16, part 1:

1. *makhloba*
2. *wichosani*
3. *Bonjour! Merci! Au revoir! Monsieur, monsieur!*

Exercise 16, part 2:

4. The essay that is considered “literature” in our day is not an ambitious or impassioned analysis of human nature.

5. Most of the luxuries and many of the “comforts” of life are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind.
6. The vast majority of “research” turned out in the modern university is essentially worthless, resulting in no measurable benefit to anything or anybody.

Punctuation 17: Dashes and the Sentence-Within-a-Sentence

Exercise 17:

1. Alyosha was a skinny little fellow—his ears stuck out like wings—lop-eared and with a large nose.
2. This is caused by the people—and you just know these are the same people who drive slowly in the left-hand lane—who routinely manage, by careful placement, to block the entire aisle with a shopping cart.
3. And we threw all our snowballs into the smoke—I think we missed Mr. Prothero—and ran out of the house to the telephone box.

Punctuation 18: Dashes Used as Parentheses

Exercise 18: [other answers may be possible]

1. He married Beauty, and lived with her many years, and their happiness—as it was founded on virtue—was complete.
2. Damon hastened straightaway to the palace and—much to the amazement of King Dionysius—gladly offered to be held hostage for his friend.
3. I think somebody—perhaps his brother, Andrew—may care for Myron as we cared for Aunt Leora.

Punctuation 19: Hyphens with Compound Adjectives

Exercise 19:

1. (1a) scientific-sounding (1b) literature
2. (2a) strip-mined (2b) coal
3. (3a) chain-owned (3b) papers
4. (4a) gas-producing (4b) bacteria

Punctuation 20: Canceling Hyphens

Exercise 20, part 1:

1. totally different philosophy
2. drastically limited vision
3. normally reliable curveball

Exercise 20, part 2: [suggested answers]

4. According to **literature that is scientific sounding**, the Contour Points take advantage of reflexology.
5. I would hate to think that my work as a writer could not be done without a dependence on **coal that is strip mined**.
6. You will note a certain similarity of content among **papers that are chain owned**.

Punctuation 21: Dashes to Emphasize Repeated Words and Contrasting Statements

Exercise 21: For each of the following, copy the complete sentence and add repeated words or a contrasting phrase according to the instructions.

1. Inglis breaks down the purpose—**the actual purpose**—of modern schooling into six basic functions.
2. Electricity—**electricity that comes from dams that were built at the public's expense**—is sold at a discount to the aluminum industry in the Pacific Northwest.

3. According to this argument, if taxes are raised—**not a likely scenario, given the size of the proposed increase**—the state's economy will be ruined.
4. This is the most overlooked—**yet most important**—aspect of a successful suspension policy.

Punctuation 22: Dashes with Appositives

Exercise 22, part 1: [suggested answers]

1. These otherwise nice young men lobbied me so hard to approve their major project proposal—**breaking through the school's network security**—that I finally relented just to see if they intended to follow through.
2. Repetition of blows produced a series of regular horizontal folds in Mr. Coyote's body tissues—**a rare and painful condition that caused Mr. Coyote to expand upward and contract downward alternately as he walked**.

Exercise 22, part 2:

3. Third, there is the danger that education will damage the sense of wonder—**the sheer joy in the created world**—that is part of our original equipment at birth.
4. Across the country, there are thousands of brownfields—**abandoned, toxic manufacturing sites that are being cleaned up one by one at the public's expense**.

Punctuation 23: Shared Duties

Exercise 23:

Here is your word bank: *colons, commas, dashes, italics, parentheses, quotation marks.*

1. dashes, parentheses
2. italics, quotation marks
3. colon, dash
4. comma, dash
5. comma, dash
6. commas, dashes, parentheses
7. comma, dash
8. colon, dash
9. dashes, parentheses

Practice Test

1. AB
2. AC
3. D
4. AB
5. E
6. AC
7. AB
8. B
9. AD
10. AE
11. C
12. BE
13. BD
14. A
15. BC
16. AD
17. A
18. BD
19. C
20. E
21. AC

22. AB
23. A
24. D
25. B

Final Test

1. AB
2. D
3. AB
4. AC
5. E
6. AB
7. AC
8. BD
9. C
10. A
11. AD
12. BE
13. AD
14. BD
15. BC
16. AE
17. A
18. B
19. B
20. E
21. A
22. AC
23. AB
24. C
25. D