



## How to use ... apostrophes

### When should I use an apostrophe?

1. **To show that a letter has been omitted (missed out).**  
Example: do not – don't, will not – won't, I am – I'm.
2. **To show possession – when the item belongs to one person, the apostrophe goes before the 's'.** Example: Mia's letter, Sally's dog, the girl's hair.
3. **To show possession – when the item belongs to more than one person, the apostrophe goes after the 's'.** Example: the teachers' staff room, the boys' football team.



## How to use colons

### When should I use a colon?

1. **To introduce a list, but only if the clause before the colon makes sense on its own.**
  - × The potion contained: snails' tails, bats' wings and garlic.
  - ✓ The potion contained strange items: snails' tails, bats' wings and garlic.
2. **To introduce an idea that is an explanation or continuation of the one before the colon. Again, the clause before the colon must make sense on its own.**
  - × You are left with: escape.
  - ✓ You are left with only one option: escape.



## How to use ... commas in clauses

### When should I use commas in clauses?

1. **Use a comma before a conjunction (but, or, yet, so) to join two independent clauses.**  
Example – I went to Paris, but it wasn't wonderful.
2. **Use a comma after an introductory element.**  
Example – After a short nap, I got right back to work.
3. **Use a comma to embed a clause.**  
Example – Proust, a French writer, is my favourite writer.



## How to use ... commas in lists.

### When should I use commas in lists?

1. **Use commas to separate items in a series of three or more things.**  
Example – I bought apples, carrots, pasta and milk.
2. **Use commas to separate adjectives.**  
Example – A thin, tall wizard appeared from the mists.



## How to use ... direct speech

Open speech marks around the part that is spoken out loud.

There must be punctuation inside of the closing speech marks.

"I'm going to buy books," said Mia.

A new line is needed when a new person speaks.

Her teacher replied, "That's a great idea."

Use a comma to introduce the speech.



## How to use ... end punctuation

How should I use end punctuation?

1. **To show the type of sentence.** Example: statements end with a full stop (.), questions end with a question mark (?) and sentences showing strong feelings or high volume end with an exclamation mark (!).
2. **Take care - don't use a comma to join two sentences that actually make sense on their own and you don't need a comma to join them. This is called a comma splice.**
  - × Jim usually gets on with everybody, he is an understanding person.
  - ✓ Jim usually gets on with everybody. He is an understanding person.



## How to check ... your grammar

What are the common mistakes?

1. **Verb tense – check that you have the same tense throughout.**
  - × I woke up to the sounds of alarms. I am afraid.
  - ✓ I woke to the sound of alarms. I was afraid.
2. **Check that your sentence makes sense by looking to see if you have included a subject.**
  - × Looking at the stars.
  - ✓ Looking at the stars, I felt hope.
3. **Modal verbs – you should not be writing *should of*, *could of*.**
  - ✓ *Should have, would have, could have.*



## How to use ... semi-colons

When should I use a semi-colon?

1. **To join two independent clauses that are linked. Both sides of the semi-colon must make sense on their own.**
  - × The man shouted; the day ended.
  - ✓ The man shouted; the boy stepped backwards.
2. **Use a semi-colon between items in a list if any of the items contain commas.**
  - ✓ My favourite writers include John Keats, a Romantic poet; Jonathan Franzen, an American writer; and Masud Ahmed, my dad.



### **How to use ... there, their and they're.**

1. **There – a place, or used with the word 'are' or 'is'**

Example – The box is over there. There are five cakes.

2. **Their – used to show belonging.**

Example – Their house is lovely. Their fur is very soft.

3. **They're – a contraction for the words they are.**

Example – They're going on holiday.