

Which Punctuation Mark Should I Use? (US English)

Punctuation Mark	Name	Basic Rules	Example
• ;	Semi-colon	1) To merge two independent clauses that may have been separated by the words "and," "yet," "but," "or," "nor," "for" and "so." This avoids a comma splice. 2) As a super-comma, to separate items in a long list.	1) There's a crocodile in the toilet; he has a lot of hair growing out of his ears. 2) At the chocolate factory I scoffed acid balls, they were super sour; everlasting gob stoppers, I spat mine out after an hour; curly toffees, rather yummy; and iced fancies, they made me sick.
•	Period (US)	1) To denote that a sentence is finished. 2) After initials, abbreviations and contracted words.	1) Always end your written sentences with a period. 2) Mins. Yrs. Mr. Dr.
• •	Colon	To <i>introduce</i> . Can be used to introduce anything: words, phrases, lists, names or quotations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hungry buffoon <i>only</i> had one thing on his mind: peanut butter cupcakes. • The hungry buffoon was thinking of lots of things: peanut butter cupcakes, chocolate donuts, crispy duck and pig's trotters. • The buffoon finished his feast in seconds: "I'll never eat again," he said.
“ ”	Double quotation marks	1) To directly and exactly quote the words of someone. 2) For scare quotes (to denote that the writer doesn't really buy into the meaning.) 3) For words used as examples. NB: To emphasize words do not use double quotation marks, use italics.	1) "I was absolutely amazed to find a crocodile in the bathroom brushing his teeth," Mother said. 2) The crocodile claimed that his behavior was "normal." 3) The words "effect" and "affect" are often confused.
‘ ’	Single quotation marks	1) To denote a quote within a quote. 2) When providing the names of horticultural cultivars.	1) "I could not believe my ears when the crocodile said, 'Can I have some privacy here?'" Mother exclaimed. 2) An example of an apple is 'Jonathon,' of a grape, 'Chardonnay,' and of the Gallica rose, 'Rosa Munda.'
• • •	Ellipsis	1) To indicate that some information has been omitted. 2) To indicate a pause in a sentence. 3) To indicate an idea is trailing off into silence.	1) As an Olympic athlete, James had tried many sports, swimming, boxing, running . . . skiing and even skydiving. 2) Sarah had a wakeboarding accident . . . the outcome was not attractive! 3) I love you but . . .