



Rosario
ENGLISH
AREA

ACADEMIC ENGLISH CLINICS

Support material for
learning English

*Improve your
academic writing*



MANAGING Punctuation

In academic writing, it is essential to accurately use punctuation as it helps to strengthen arguments that are made in the text.

The comma, semicolon, and colon are often misused because they all can indicate a pause in a series.



Examples

COMMA



- The comma is used to show a separation of ideas or elements within the structure of a sentence. Additionally, it is used in numbers, dates, and letter writing after the salutation and closing.

- Direct address: Thanks for all your help, John.
- Separation of two complete sentences: We went to the movies, and then we went out to lunch.
- Separating lists or elements within sentences: Suzi wanted the black, green, and blue dress.

SEMICOLON



- The semicolon (;) is used to connect independent clauses. It shows a closer relationship between the clauses than a period would show.

- John was hurt; he knew she only said it to upset him.

COLON

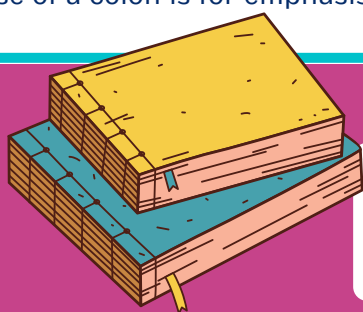


- A colon (:) has three main uses. The first is after a word introducing a quotation, an explanation, an example, or a series.
- The second is between independent clauses when the second explains the first, similar to a semicolon:
- The third use of a colon is for emphasis:

- First use:** He was planning to study four subjects: politics, philosophy, sociology, and economics.
- Second use:** I didn't have time to get changed: I was already late
- Third use:** There was one thing she loved more than any other: her dog.



Examples



Two other common punctuation marks are the dash and hyphen. These marks are often confused with each other due to their appearance but they are very different.

DASH



- En dash: Twice as long as a hyphen, the en dash is a symbol (–) that is used in writing or printing to indicate a range, connections or differentiations, such as 1880-1945 or Princeton-New York trains.
- Em dash: Longer than the en dash, the em dash can be used in place of a comma, parenthesis, or colon to enhance readability or emphasize the conclusion of a sentence. For example, She gave him her answer – No! Whether you put spaces around the em dash or not is a style choice. Just be consistent.

- A dash is used to separate words into statements. There are two common types of dashes: en dash and em dash.



Example

HYPHEN



A hyphen is used to join two or more words together into a compound term and is not separated by spaces.

- part-time, back-to-back, well-known.

MANAGING *Punctuation*



Brackets, braces, and parentheses are symbols used to contain words that are a further explanation or are considered a group.

BRACKETS



Example

- Brackets are the squared off notations ([]) used for technical explanations or to clarify meaning. If you remove the information in the brackets, the sentence will still make sense.
- He [Mr. Jones] was the last person seen at the house

BRACES



Example

- Braces ({}) are used to contain two or more lines of text or listed items to show that they are considered as a unit. They are not commonplace in most writing but can be seen in computer programming to show what should be contained within the same lines. They can also be used in mathematical expressions.
- $2\{1+[23-3]\}=X.$

PARENTHESES



Example

- Parentheses () are curved notations used to contain further thoughts or qualifying remarks. However, parentheses can be replaced by commas without changing the meaning in most cases.
- John and Jane (who were actually half brother and sister) both have red hair.



The final three punctuation forms in English grammar are the apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipsis. Unlike previously mentioned grammatical marks, they are not related to one another in any form.

APOSTROPHE



Examples

- An apostrophe (') is used to indicate the omission of a letter or letters from a word, the possessive case, or the plurals of lowercase letters.
- Omission of letters from a word: I've seen that movie several times. She wasn't the only one who knew the answer.
- Possessive case: Sara's dog bit the neighbor.
- Plural for lowercase letters: Six people were told to mind their p's and q's

QUOTATION MARKS



Examples

- Quotations marks (" ") are a pair of punctuation marks used primarily to mark the beginning and end of a passage attributed to another and repeated word for word. They are also used to indicate meanings and to indicate the unusual or dubious status of a word.
- "Don't go outside," she said.
- Single quotation marks (' ') are used most frequently for quotes within quotes.
- Marie told the teacher, "I saw Marc at the playground, and he said to me 'Bill started the fight,' and I believed him."

ELLIPSIS



Examples

- The ellipsis is most commonly represented by three periods (. . .)
- The ellipsis is used in writing or printing to indicate an omission, especially of letters or words. Ellipses are frequently used within quotations to jump from one phrase to another, omitting unnecessary words that do not interfere with the meaning.
- Omission of words: She began to count, "One, two, three, four..." until she got to 10, then went to find him.
- Within a quotation: When Newton stated, "An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion..." he developed the law of motion.



A Paragraph



A paragraph is a group of sentences that generally discusses only one main idea. There are some characteristics to keep in mind:

- Unity: all the sentences are related to and develop the main idea.
- A paragraph holds together; each idea leads smoothly into the next one.
- A good paragraph generally includes 4 parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, details, and a concluding sentence

A. A topic sentence expresses the principal idea, and all the sentences in the paragraph back it up. The topic sentence is generally the first sentence in a paragraph. The topic sentence is made up of 1. a topic (the subject of the paragraph), and 2. the controlling idea (the main idea about the topic).

Example: Good language learners share a series of characteristics.

Topic

Controlling idea

B. The supporting sentences validate the truthfulness of the main idea expressed in the topic sentence. Generally, there are two or three supporting sentences in a paragraph. A good paragraph needs transition words to guide the reader.

Example of transition words:

- First, first of all, second, third, etc.
- Also, in addition, moreover, furthermore.
- Next, last, finally.



C. Supporting ideas are developed through details. Details can include evidence, explanations, or examples to help develop the supporting sentences. Similar to supporting sentences, details also need transition signals to add coherence to the ideas.

Examples of transition signals:

- Introducing explanations: In fact, indeed, that is.
- Introducing an example: For example, for instance, an example of (noun).
- Introducing evidence: According to, in (year), As (author) says/claims/has claim.

D. A concluding sentence has two objectives: 1. It signals the end of a paragraph, and 2. Reminds the reader of the important ideas. Not all the paragraphs need one concluding sentence; for example, in an essay composed of various paragraphs; however, the concluding sentence is a must in a single paragraph.

Example of concluding signals:

- In brief, in conclusion, in short, we can see that.



USING Context clues



Context Clues are hints that the author gives to help the reader to define difficult, unknown or unusual words. Most vocabulary is gained through reading, that is why it is so important to recognize and take advantage of context clues.



Types of context clues. There are at least four kinds of context clues that are quite common



Synonym

A synonym, or word with the same meaning, is used in the sentence.

Example: He was so **portly** that his doctor declared him **overweight**.

Antonym

Words that have the opposite meaning help to reveal the meaning of the unknown term.

Example: Although some students are **loquacious**, others **don't even talk**

Explanation

The unknown word is explained within the sentence or in a sentence preceding.

Example: My mother is so **somnolent** that she requires medication to help her **stay awake** for more than a short time.

Example

Specific examples are used to explain the unknown term.

Example: Natural resources, **such as** water, coal and air contribute a variety of essential elements to our well-being.

"Being able to successfully interpret context clues also makes readers better test takers. Coming across unfamiliar vocabulary on a standardized test not only confuses people, but also can be very discouraging. If people don't feel confident about what they're being asked, they won't be confident when choosing an answer" Vocab Gal

THE SCIENTIFIC Article



A scientific article presents research findings written by researchers and scientists. They are generally considered primary sources and are written for other researchers. The most recent articles will contain the most recent work in the field, with references to previously published works in the field of study.

Types of scientific Article



Original Articles: contain original data and present the results of empirical studies. This type of paper is a primary source.

Review Articles: summarize and critique original articles within a single field. They will produce a continuous view of a subject using a number of original articles. This is a secondary source and may be a good place to start if you are looking for an overview on a particular topic.



Theoretical Articles: present new theories developed from existing research. These papers will be built on data taken from other sources and results from original articles.

White Papers; are an authoritative report or guide presenting the issuing body's philosophy on the matter. While they may be based on original research, they are meant to promote a group's stance or viewpoint. In science, White Papers are sometimes referred to as Grey Literature as they are published scientific literature outside of commercial publishing and the peer review process.



VALIDITY AND RELEVANCE

Of the sources

Validating the relevance of the reading sources is a very important step in academic reading. Validating the information protects the reader from inaccurate information as well as helps them to create a coherent picture of what is being read. The sources to validate any text can be represented in two ways: 1. The readers' own knowledge and beliefs of the information, and consistency with previous texts information. In order to validate the relevance of the academic sources, the reader can answer to some questions for each section of the article: title and abstract, literature review, methodology, results, discussion and conclusions, and also, the writing style. Some examples are:

Title and abstract:

- Does the title reflect the major independent and dependent variables?
- Does the abstract provide a brief (150 word) summary?
- Do the title and abstract combined provide enough information and key words to capture attention and to find this paper using an electronic database search?

Literature review:

- Is the review thorough and complete, but also focused and concise? Does it emphasize current research (i.e., research published in the last 10 years)?
- Does the review critically evaluate the research or merely describe and summarize? Is the critical evaluation balanced so that strengths as well as weaknesses are identified and discussed?
- Does the review identify problems and pitfalls...mistakes or errors that have been previously made?

Methodology:

- Does the author mention the steps taken to obtain access to people and sites?
- What is the research design...is it a survey, experimental study, quasi-experimental study, mixed (qualitative and quantitative)?
- Has the author identified good, valid, and reliable instruments to use to measure the variables?

Results:

- How were the data analyzed: Pearson's r, t-test, ANOVA, chi square, other multivariate methods? Were any group comparisons carried out?
- Were appropriate steps taken to analyze the text or visual data into themes, perspectives, or categories?

Discussion and conclusions:

- Did the study adequately address the research question(s) identified in the introduction?
- Does the author(s) clearly distinguish between actual findings and interpretations?
- Are the findings discussed in relation to previous research and to the conceptual/theoretical framework?

Writing style:

- Does the article follow APA style?
- Was the article written using a personal/impersonal point of view?
- Is the writing concise, simple and clear?

TAKING NOTES TO IMPROVE *Comprehension*

Taking effective notes is an important skill in academic reading. By taking good notes, we can save time by avoiding reading the same text over and over again. Taking notes increases the readers' attention as well as their comprehension of the text. There are different strategies that can be followed to take effective notes:

A Take Notes from memory:

- Read an entire section in the text (e.g., a paragraph) and then take notes of the important points that you remember.
- If you do not remember all the details, try to focus on the main points, and refer back to the text as needed so that you can fill in the gaps



B Annotate directly on the text:

- Whether you are reading on paper or online, you can make little comments directly on the document.
- You can use colors, summary words, or symbols to remember the information in the text.

C Make a concept map or an organizer:

- Organize the information visually.
- Make sure you differentiate the main ideas from supporting ideas (e.g., with colors).
- Generate your own Q&A to help you summarize main points.



D Cornell style notes:

- Divide a piece of paper into three sections, left column, right column, and a space at the bottom.
- Use the left column for keywords and questions.
- Use the right column to explain the keywords and answer the questions.
- Summarize the entire section you read at the space on the bottom.

Title	
Left column	Right column
Key words and Questions	Explanations and answers
Summary	

E Don't:

- Copy the exact information from the text.
- Avoid over-highlighting. Highlighting too much can distract you from main points.
- You don't need to write pages of notes—keep them brief and focused.

