

Typist Things

Punctuation aids the reader in making sense of your writing-that is its whole point.Punctuation gives the reader hints about word groupings.The spacing of your punctuation is important to this process-remember that you are trying to guide the reader,not confuse him or her .proper spacing also allows the computer to make correct decisions about things like line-breaks and quotation marks (For more information see the grammar handbook discussions of individual punctuation.) By the way, notice how irritating and amateurish this paragraph was with improper spacing!

End Punctuation: No space between the last word and the punctuation mark; one space between the punctuation and the first word of the next sentence.

last word. Next word

If you do it this way, the computer will help you by automatically capitalizing the first word of the new sentence if you forget. (That sample paragraph at the top has an example in the fourth line where the writer defeated the computer by cramming the period against the first word of the following sentence.)

Middle Punctuation (commas, semicolons, colons): No space between the previous word and the punctuation, one space after the punctuation.

last word, next word

last word; next word

Apostrophes: If within the word, no space on either side; if at the end of the word, one space after.

one dog's house

two dogs' houses

Hyphens: No space on either side. Use a hyphen to join two words into one.

lily-livered scoundrel

one and one-half cups

Dashes (which are different from hyphens): Hit the hyphen key twice, with no space on either side. (Most modern word processors will turn your two keystrokes into a long dash.) Use a dash to set off one element of the sentence from another.

John--enraged--said

John—enraged—said

Do not do it this way: John-enraged-said

Quotation Marks and Parentheses: Space before the first one, but no space between it and the material it encloses; no space between the last word and the final mark, and one space after it. Use the round parentheses (above the #9 and #0 keys) not the fancy {curly} or [square] ones.

He said, “me too,” and we heard.

Mary (his sister) heard too.

- If you put a space between the parentheses and the words inside, you can trick the computer into leaving your punctuation as an orphan at the end of the line (which looks foolish). The fifth line of the sample at the top of this handout shows this silly problem. You can get the same “idiot” result by putting extra space around the quotation marks.
- Modern computers figure out how to “curl” the quotation marks by looking at the spaces around them. If you put spaces in the wrong place, you get this kind of confusing result:

He said,” me too, “and we heard.

Ellipses: Only three dots, with a space between them. If the ellipses come after a sentence, the sentence ends the usual way, followed by the ellipses. Use them to show you left out material when you are quoting.

The dog . . . sat in the field. . . . His master said . . .

Book Titles, Article Titles: Titles of larger works (such as books) are underlined or italicized (not both). Titles of shorter works (such as poems or short stories) appear in quotation marks. Do not put the title of your own paper in quotation marks—just type it with the first letter of all the main words capitalized.

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