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Punctuation Resources

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PUNCTUATION

APOSTROPHES

Apostrophes are used to show ownership or possession. They are also used in contractions to show that letters have been left out, for example, *isn't* (*is not*).



Which sentence has the correct punctuation?

- 1 ☐ The boy's suffered serious injuries from playing with Uncle John's fireworks.
☐ The boys suffered serious injurie's from playing with Uncle John's fireworks.
☐ The boys suffered serious injuries from playing with Uncle John's fireworks.
☐ The boys suffered serious injuries from playing with Uncle Johns fireworks's.

HINT

Check whether all the words with apostrophes show ownership.

- 2 ☐ These three ladie's husbands all work for the same company.
☐ These three lady's husbands all work for the same company.
☐ These three ladies husband's all work for the same company.
☐ These three ladies' husbands all work for the same company.

TRAP!

The word **before** the apostrophes should be a complete word. Is it singular or plural?

- 3 ☐ This is my brother Lewis room.
☐ This is my brother Lewis' room.
☐ This is my brother Lewises room.
☐ This is my brother Lewis'es room.

HINT

To make words ending in **s** possessive, add an apostrophe after the **s** (no need to add another **s**), for example, **cats' tails**.

- 4 ☐ It's a shame we don't have a good doughnut shop in this town.
☐ Its a shame we don't have a good doughnut shop in this town.
☐ It's a shame we do'nt have a good doughnut shop in this town.
☐ I'ts a shame we don't have a good doughnut shop in this town.

- 5 ☐ It's Curtis' turn to do the dishe's tonight.
☐ It's Curtises turn to do the dish's tonight.
☐ It's Curtis' turn to do the dishes tonight.
☐ It's Curtis turn to do the dishs tonight.

HINT

Plural words do not need apostrophes, unless they show ownership.

- 6 ☐ There were two kangaroos on the road right in front of us.
☐ There were two kangaroo's on the road right in front of us.
☐ There were two kangaroos' on the road right in front of us.
☐ There were two kangaroos's on the road right in front of us.

THINGS TO KNOW

Possessive pronouns (**his, hers, yours, its**) do not need apostrophes.



- 7 ☐ The tree was loaded with dozens' of ripe orange's.
☐ The tree was loaded with dozen's of ripe orange's.
☐ The tree was loaded with dozens of ripe orange's.
☐ The tree was loaded with dozens of ripe oranges.

HINT

How many birds are being referred to?

- 8 ☐ The birds' wing was badly damaged.
☐ The birds wing was badly damaged.
☐ The bird's wing was badly damaged.
☐ The birds's wing was badly damaged.

HINT

*Possessive pronouns (**his, hers, yours, its**) do not need apostrophes.*

- 9 ☐ Is this jacket yours' or hers?
☐ Is this jacket yours or hers?
☐ Is this jacket your's or hers'?
☐ Is this jacket your's or her's?

HINT

***Children** is already plural. Add an apostrophe and **s** to show ownership.*

- 10 ☐ People often hire clowns' to provide entertainment at childrens' parties.
☐ People often hire clown's to provide entertainment at children's parties.
☐ People often hire clowns to provide entertainment at childrens parties.
☐ People often hire clowns to provide entertainment at children's parties.

- 11 Which word correctly completes the sentence?

a can of soft drink for you.

Here's

☐

Her'es

☐

Heres'

☐

Heres

☐

- 12 Which word correctly completes the sentence?

exciting to be able to see the cheetahs up close.

Its

☐

Its'

☐

I'ts

☐

It's

☐

TRAP!

*Work out whether **its** is a possessive pronoun or a contraction of **it is**.*

CAPITAL LETTERS

Capital letters are used for the first letter of a sentence and proper nouns (or names). They are also used for the personal pronoun *I*, and for the main words in titles of things such as books, poems and plays.

**Which sentence has the correct capital letters?**

- 1 ☐ rafaël and angela went to the cinema on sunday afternoon.
☐ Rafael and angela went to the cinema on Sunday afternoon.
☐ Rafael and Angela went to the Cinema on sunday afternoon.
☐ Rafael and Angela went to the cinema on Sunday afternoon.
- 2 ☐ The Red baron was a german pilot who flew many missions in world war one.
☐ The Red Baron was a German pilot who flew many missions in World War One.
☐ The red baron was a german Pilot who flew many missions in World War One.
☐ the red baron was a German Pilot who flew many missions in world war one.
- 3 ☐ My brother and I were silver medallists at the Commonwealth Games held in brisbane.
☐ My brother and I were silver medallists at the Commonwealth Games held in Brisbane.
☐ My brother and i were Silver Medallists at the commonwealth games held in Brisbane.
☐ My brother and I were silver medallists at the commonwealth games held in brisbane.
- 4 ☐ "You'll need to have some physiotherapy on that knee," said Doctor Chang.
☐ "You'll need to have some physiotherapy on that knee," said doctor Chang.
☐ "You'll need to have some physiotherapy on that knee," said Doctor chang.
☐ "You'll need to have some physiotherapy on that knee," said doctor chang.
- 5 ☐ "I'd prefer to buy a washing machine made by simpson," said Alison to the Sales Assistant.
☐ "I'd prefer to buy a washing machine made by simpson," said alison to the sales assistant.
☐ "i'd prefer to buy a washing machine made by simpson," said Alison to the Sales Assistant.
☐ "I'd prefer to buy a washing machine made by Simpson," said Alison to the sales assistant.
- 6 ☐ "There's no vegemite left," Complained Brad.
☐ "There's No Vegemite Left," complained brad.
☐ "There's no Vegemite left," complained Brad.
☐ "There's no vegemite left," complained brad.

TRAP!

*In the names of people, places and events, each individual word should be capitalised if it is a proper noun. For example, **New South Wales**.*

HINT

The names of well-known events should be capitalised.

HINT

Brand names should begin with capital letters.



COLONS AND SEMICOLONS

A colon (:) is used to introduce further information. This information could be a list or a series of ideas; a word, phrase or clause; or a quotation or definition. For example: *The store had all of my favourite drinks: Coke, Sprite and Fanta.*

Semicolons (;) are mostly used to separate two equal and balanced parts of a sentence. For example: *Our house plans were approved on Friday; work will commence next week.*



What does the colon do in the following sentences?

- 1 You have three choices: orange, lemon or lime.

- ☐ introduces a quotation
☐ introduces a list
☐ emphasises one idea more than another
☐ introduces an idea

HINT

Use a colon to introduce a list.

- 2 The marine biologist made a good point: "Remember, the only thing we know for sure about sharks is that they are unpredictable".

- ☐ introduces a quotation
☐ introduces a list
☐ emphasises one idea more than another
☐ emphasises two ideas

HINT

Colons are used to introduce quotations.

- 3 What punctuation mark is missing from the sentence?

In this world there are two types of people those who can ski and those who can't.

- colon (:) semicolon (;)
☐ ☐

Which of the following correctly completes the sentence?

- 4 As a baby he was loud

- ☐ : as a man he's even louder.
☐ ; as a man he's even louder.

HINT

Use a semicolon if the two parts of the sentence are balanced.

- 5 At the café I ate too many things

- ☐ : a chicken burger, fries, fruit cake, a chocolate bar and a milkshake.
☐ ; a chicken burger, fries, fruit cake, a chocolate bar and a milkshake.



COMMAS

Commas are used to signal a short pause when reading. They also separate items in a list, separate two or more adjectives or adverbs, and help make meaning clearer by separating parts of a sentence.



Which sentence has the correct punctuation?

- 1 ☐ Regardless of the weather tomorrow's training session, will be going ahead.
☐ Regardless of the weather, tomorrow's training session, will be going ahead.
☐ Regardless of the weather, tomorrow's training session will be going ahead.
☐ Regardless of the weather, tomorrow's training session will be, going ahead.

 - 2 ☐ Even though the substitute teacher, is nice, I'm looking forward, to having our teacher back.
☐ Even though the substitute teacher is nice, I'm looking forward to having our teacher back.
☐ Even though, the substitute teacher is nice, I'm looking forward to having our teacher back.
☐ Even though the substitute teacher is nice I'm looking forward to having our teacher back.

 - 3 ☐ My four favourite foods are lasagne roast chicken, baked potatoes and spaghetti.
☐ My four favourite foods are, lasagne, roast chicken, baked potatoes, and spaghetti.
☐ My four favourite foods are lasagne, roast chicken baked potatoes and spaghetti.
☐ My four favourite foods are lasagne, roast chicken, baked potatoes and spaghetti.
- TRAP!**

The commas are separating **four** items in a list.
-
- 4 ☐ It is extremely rude, to be late to a business meeting whatever your excuse may be.
☐ It is extremely rude, to be late to a business meeting, whatever your excuse may be.
☐ It is extremely rude to be late to a business meeting whatever your excuse may be.
☐ It is extremely rude to be late to a business meeting, whatever your excuse may be.
- HINT**

It's the **meaning** of a sentence, not its length, that determines how many commas are needed.
-
- 5 ☐ Although I am happy we won, I can't help feeling sorry for the other team's supporters.
☐ Although I am happy we won I can't help feeling sorry for the other team's supporters.
☐ Although I am happy we won I can't help feeling sorry, for the other team's supporters.
☐ Although, I am happy we won, I can't help feeling sorry for the other team's supporters.
- HINT**

The word **although** signals that a comma is necessary when an opposing idea is presented.



PUNCTUATION

CONTRACTIONS

Contractions are made by joining two words together to make one word. In contractions, apostrophes indicate that a letter or letters have been left out. For example, *haven't* is the contraction of *have* and *not*.



1 Which two words have been joined to create the contraction *they'll*?

she will

☐

he will

☐

they are

☐

they will

☐

2 Which two words have been joined to create the contraction *aren't*?

a not

☐

are not

☐

aren't not

☐

has not

☐

3 Which two words have been joined to create the contraction *I'll*?

I well

☐

I have

☐

I would

☐

I will

☐

4 Which contraction has the correct punctuation?

wouldn't

☐

willn't

☐

would'f

☐

would'nt

☐

5 Which contraction has the correct punctuation?

hav'nt

☐

had'nt

☐

hadnt

☐

haven't

☐

HINT

Remember, the apostrophe tells you where a letter is missing.

HINT

Think about the original two words and how they are spelt.

Which word or words correctly complete the sentence?

6 The tiny boat stay afloat in such wild seas.

isn't

☐

haven't

☐

could've

☐

couldn't

☐

7 I bought an extra ticket if I'd known you wanted to go with us.

would've

☐

will have

☐

would of

☐

would

☐

HINT

Use the meaning of the sentence to help you.

8 In my opinion, never be a better golfer than Tiger Woods.

that'll

☐

there'll

☐

the will

☐

there's

☐

9 You tell Mum about the surprise party we're planning.

isn't

☐

mustn't

☐

musn't

☐

haven't

☐

HINT

Make sure the tense of the contraction is consistent with the tense of the sentence.

DASHES, ELLIPSES AND PARENTHESES

Dashes (–) are used instead of commas or brackets to separate extra information from the main part of a sentence. A dash can also show a sudden change in tone or thought.

For example: *The two rugby codes – union and league – have a big fan base in Australia.*

An ellipsis is a set of three spaced full stops (...) to show that something has been left out of a sentence, usually in a quotation or dialogue. For example: *The letter began, "Dear Mr Carter, We regret to inform you that your employment application has been unsuccessful ..."*

Parentheses (or brackets) enclose extra information that would interrupt the flow of the sentence. For example: *Mum, Dad and Auntie Mavis (who turned 80 last week) came to the picnic with us.*



Which punctuation mark is missing from the sentence?

- 1 Our two sons [] Shane and Brett [] are fantastic cricketers.

– (dash) , (comma) ... (ellipsis) ! (exclamation mark)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

- 2 Some of the best things in life [] peace, love, happiness [] don't cost any money.

– (dash) , (comma) ... (ellipsis) ? (question mark)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

- 3 In this sentence, which punctuation mark is the arrow pointing at?
The girls could hear people singing "Australians all let us rejoice, for we are young and free ..." ←

dash parentheses ellipsis colon

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

- 4 In this sentence, what does the ellipsis indicate?
"Now, what on earth ...?"

- ☐ that the sentence is an exclamation
- ☐ that the speaker's voice is interrupted
- ☐ that the sentence should be shouted
- ☐ that it is written in indirect speech

TRAP!

When an ellipsis is used to end a question, the bottom of the question mark adds a fourth dot.

- 5 In this sentence, how would you best describe the words in parentheses?
I am going to the beauty salon (the one in Beaumont Street) to have a manicure.

- ☐ They are untrue.
- ☐ They provide additional information.
- ☐ They provide an incomplete idea.
- ☐ They are presented as direct speech.

HINT

Removal of the information in parentheses doesn't change the meaning of the sentence.



- 6 In the following sentence, the function of the ellipses is to indicate

“Um ... could you tell me where the bathroom is, please?”

- ☐ direct speech.
☐ missing information.
☐ unnecessary information.
☐ a pause.

- 7 Insert parentheses in this sentence to make the meaning clearer.

Killer whales which are black and white are actually a species belonging to the dolphin family.

- 8 Indicate where an ellipses could be inserted to ensure the sentence makes sense.

“The treasure is buried at,” gasped the dying pirate. But he never finished his sentence.

↑

↑

↑

- 9 Which of the following punctuation marks could be inserted in these two places in the sentence?

Our dog a miniature fox terrier has gone missing.



- ☐ only dashes
☐ only parentheses
☐ dashes or parentheses
☐ ellipses

FULL STOPS, QUESTION MARKS AND EXCLAMATION MARKS

Full stops are used to end sentences. Question marks are used to end questions.

Exclamation marks are used at the end of sentences to indicate surprise, anger or excitement.



Which sentence has the correct punctuation?

- 1 ☐ That car's tyres need replacing, They are dangerously worn.
☐ That car's tyres need replacing. They are dangerously worn.
☐ That car's tyres need replacing they are dangerously worn.
☐ That car's tyres need replacing, they are dangerously worn.

HINT

There are two complete sentences here.

- 2 ☐ The new bowling club is now finished? it will be open for business on Monday.
☐ The new bowling club is now finished, it will be open for business on Monday.
☐ The new bowling club is now finished? it will be open for business on Monday.
☐ The new bowling club is now finished. It will be open for business on Monday.

- 3 ☐ No one could have anticipated the disaster it was just a freak accident.
☐ No one could have anticipated, the disaster, it was just a freak accident.
☐ No one could have anticipated the disaster. It was just a freak accident.
☐ No one could have anticipated the disaster It was just a freak accident.

TRAP!

Don't use commas where full stops should be.

- 4 ☐ "Do you have a dollar coin I could borrow!" asked Jai.
☐ "Do you have a dollar coin I could borrow" asked Jai.
☐ "Do you have a dollar coin I could borrow," asked Jai.
☐ "Do you have a dollar coin I could borrow?" asked Jai.

HINT

*The word **asked** is the main clue as to what type of sentence this is.*

- 5 ☐ There were over fifty guests at the wedding, it was lovely to see so many people could attend.
☐ There were over fifty guests at the wedding. It was lovely to see so many people could attend.
☐ There were over fifty guests at the wedding? it was lovely to see so many people could attend.
☐ There were over fifty guests at the wedding it was lovely to see so many people could attend!

- 6 ☐ "We're going to crash!" exclaimed Natalie.
☐ "We're going to crash?" exclaimed Natalie.
☐ "We're going to crash," exclaimed Natalie.
☐ "We're going to crash." exclaimed Natalie.

HINT

*The subject (and **exclaimed**) helps determine what punctuation to use.*



QUOTATION MARKS

Quotation marks (or speech marks) are used to indicate direct speech (the actual words spoken). Indirect speech is reported speech (not the speaker's actual words) and doesn't use quotation marks.



- 1 Which sentence has the correct punctuation for direct speech?
 - ☐ The flight attendant asked me if I would like "tea or coffee".
 - ☐ The flight attendant asked me if I would like tea or coffee.
 - ☐ The flight attendant asked me "if I would like tea or coffee."
 - ☐ "Would you like tea or coffee?" asked the flight attendant.

HINT

Direct speech is always shown within quotation marks.

- 2 Which sentence has the correct punctuation for indirect speech?
 - ☐ The flight attendant asked me if I would like "tea or coffee".
 - ☐ The flight attendant asked me if I would like tea or coffee.
 - ☐ The flight attendant asked me "if I would like tea or coffee."
 - ☐ "Would you like tea or coffee?" asked the flight attendant.

- 3 Which sentence has the correct punctuation?
 - ☐ "Congratulations. You've got the job!" said the store manager.
 - ☐ "Congratulations. You've got the job said the store manager."
 - ☐ Congratulations. You've got the job! said the store manager.
 - ☐ "Congratulations. You've got the job! said" the store manager.

HINT

Use quotation marks for the direct speech, then identify the speaker.

- 4 Which sentence has the correct punctuation?
 - ☐ "There are too many people here sighed Anil, "let's just go home."
 - ☐ There are too many people here, sighed Anil, "let's just go home."
 - ☐ "There are too many people here," sighed Anil, "let's just go home."
 - ☐ "There are too many people here, sighed Anil, let's just go home."

- 5 Which sentence has the correct punctuation for indirect speech?
 - ☐ The surfer said "He'd seen a huge grey fin" only metres away from him.
 - ☐ The surfer said he'd seen a huge grey fin only metres away from him.
 - ☐ The surfer said he'd seen "a huge grey fin only metres away from him."
 - ☐ The surfer," said he'd seen a huge grey fin only metres away from him.

TRAP!

Only the exact words that are spoken need quotation marks.

- 6 Which of the following correctly translates this sentence into indirect speech?
"That soup was very tasty," said Yul.
 - ☐ Yul said that the soup was very tasty" said Yul.
 - ☐ Yul said that the soup was very tasty.
 - ☐ Mia said "That soup was very tasty, Yul."
 - ☐ That soup was very tasty, Mia.