

AMA Manual of Style

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Punctuation

Cheryl Iverson

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Item type: chapter

Periods, question marks, and exclamation points are the 3 end-of-sentence punctuation marks. Periods are the most common end-of-sentence punctuation marks. Use a period at the end of a declarative or imperative sentence and at the end of each table footnote and each figure legend...

Period, Question Mark, Exclamation Point

Cheryl Iverson

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Item type: section

...after journeying through the world of punctuation, and seeing what it can do, I am all the more convinced that we should fight like tigers to preserve our punctuation and we should start now. Lynne Truss Periods, question marks, and exclamation points are the 3 end-of-sentence punctuation marks. | Periods are the most common end-of-sentence punctuation marks. Use a period at the end of a declarative or imperative sentence and at the end of each table footnote and each figure legend. Advances in medical technology have saved many lives. Always listen carefully. Also use a period after a rhetorical question (one

Comma, Semicolon, Colon

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Item type: section

Commas, semicolons, and colons can be used to indicate a break or pause in thought, to set off material, or to introduce a new but connected thought. Each has specific uses, and the strength of the break in thought determines which mark is appropriate. | Commas are the least forceful of the 3 marks. There are definite rules for using commas; however, usage is often subjective. Some writers and editors use the comma frequently to indicate what they

see as a natural pause in the flow of words, but commas can be overused. The trend is to use them sparingly.

Hyphens and Dashes

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Hyphens and dashes are internal punctuation marks used for linkage and clarity of expression. | The hyphen is a connector; it may join “what is similar and also what is disjunctive....it divides as well as marries.” The hyphen connects words, prefixes, and suffixes permanently or temporarily. Certain compound words always contain hyphens. Such hyphens are called orthographic. Examples are merry-go-round, free-for-all, and mother-in-law. For temporary connections, hyphens help prevent ambiguity, clarify meaning, and indicate word breaks at the end of a line. In general, when not otherwise specified, hyphens should be used only as an aid to the reader’s understanding,

Forward Slash (Virgule, Solidus)

Cheryl Iverson

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The forward slash is used to represent per, and, or or and to divide material (eg, numerator and denominator in fractions; month, day, and year in dates [only in tables and figures]; lines of poetry). It may also be used in URLs (see , Manuscript Preparation). | When 2 terms are of equal weight in an expression and and is implied between them to express this equivalence, the forward slash can be retained. The diagnosis and initial treatment/diagnostic planning were recorded. If the approval process raises concerns among the researchers or the ethics committee/IRB members, the author may want to explain

Parentheses and Brackets

Cheryl Iverson

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Item type: section

Parentheses and brackets are internal punctuation marks used to set off material that is nonrestrictive or, as in the case of mathematical and chemical expressions, to alert the reader to the special functions occurring within. | Use parentheses to indicate supplementary explanations, identification, direction to the reader, or translation. (See also , Dashes, and , Brackets.) A known volume of fluid (100 mL) was injected. The differences were not

significant ($P > .05$). One of us (B.O.G.) saw the patient in 2006. Asymmetry of the upper part of the rib cage (patient 5) and pseudarthrosis of the first and second ribs (patient

Quotation Marks

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Quotation marks are used to indicate material that is taken directly from another source. | Use quotation marks to enclose a direct quotation of no more than 4 lines from textual material or speeches (for longer material, see also , Quotation Marks, Block Quotations). When the quotation marks enclose conversational dialogue, there is no limit to the length that may be set in run-on format. In all quoted material, follow the wording, spelling, and punctuation of the original exactly. The only time this rule does not apply is when the quoted material, although a complete sentence or part of a

Ellipses

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Ellipses are 3 spaced dots (...) generally used to indicate omission of 1 or more words, lines, paragraphs, or data from quoted material (this omission being the ellipsis). Excerpts from the following paragraph will be used to demonstrate the use of ellipses. In *Fruit Displayed on a Stand* (cover), exhibited in 1882, Caillebotte depicts a traditional subject in a manner far removed from the traditional cornucopian flow of fruit. Instead, he shows a stark, rectangular grid lit by centers of rounded forms, brilliantly colored. Vivid oranges, reds, and purples, light greens, creamy violets, and color-flecked gold are cupped within areas

Period

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Periods are the most common end-of-sentence punctuation marks. Use a period at the end of a declarative or imperative sentence and at the end of each table footnote and each figure legend. Advances in medical technology have saved many lives. Always listen carefully. Also use a period after a rhetorical question (one not requiring an answer). Where, indeed, is the Osler of today. The period precedes ending quotation marks and reference citations. The child is rated in 7 areas, such as “accepts responsibility” and “interacts appropriately with

peers.” We followed the methods of Wilkes et al. The period follows a closing apostrophe:
Their

Question Mark

Cheryl Iverson

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The primary use of the question mark is to end interrogative sentences. When did he go into private practice? If this article were a work of the 1930s, not the 1990s, would we view it differently? And should we? Use the question mark to show doubt about specific data. Hippocrates (460?-375 bce) is often referred to as the Father of Medicine. Place the question mark inside the end quotation mark (see , Quotation Marks, Placement), the closing parenthesis, or the end bracket when the question mark is part of the quoted or parenthetical material. The patient asked her physician of 25 years, “Why