

## Punctuation Guide for Parents

If you are a child of the seventies and eighties, you might have grown up in a time where grammar and punctuation was not seen as important. However, times have changed, now children are expected to not only know what all the different punctuation symbols mean, but also they have to be able to use them in their work and assessments. With this in mind, we've put together a simple guide to punctuation for parents so when your children ask you about a row of dots, you will be able to wow them with your knowledge!

**The full stop (.)** is an easy one, used at the end of a sentence.

The question mark (?) another easy one, or is it?

**Commas (,)** as I'm sure you are aware, are used to separate sentences to stop them from getting too long! They can also be used in lists; I enjoy reading, horseriding, painting and hand gliding.

**Exclamation marks (!)** are generally used in dialogue (when someone is speaking) to show that someone is shouting or angry or to really make a point. "I really, really hate peas!"

**Semi Colons (;)** are used when you are making two short similar points. He loves cooking; he can't get enough of recipes. They can also be used to separate a list from a comma (as above!)

**Colons (:)** are used to provide more information. She was a great writer: she worked so hard trying to make her characters come alive.

**Speech marks (" ")**, some children find it easier to refer to them as 66 and 99. These are used around speech when a character in a story is talking, "I hate grammar", the little boy whispered.

**Ellipses (...)** we use ellipses to build suspense. There was a noise, a loud, uncomfortable noise...

**Brackets ( )** these add extra information for the reader. She was pretty (or so she thought).

**Hyphens (-)** used to separate sentences. My mum – who is very kind – stopped to help the injured kitten.

**Apostrophes (')** there are two kinds – possession and to show a missing letter.

Possession – the girl's coat (one girl) or the girls' coats (more than one girl).

Missing letter – can't, don't, didn't.

## In the 2014 National Curriculum children are expected to understand and use these terms:

**Year 1** - letter, capital letter, word, singular, plural, sentence, punctuation, full stop, question mark, exclamation mark

**Year 2** - noun, noun phrase, statement, question, exclamation, command, compound, suffix, adjective, adverb, verb, tense (past, present), apostrophe, comma

**Year 3** - preposition conjunction, word family, prefix, clause, subordinate clause, direct speech, consonant, consonant letter vowel, vowel letter, inverted commas (or 'speech marks')

**Year 4** - determiner, pronoun, possessive pronoun, adverbial

**Year 5** - modal verb, relative pronoun, relative clause, parenthesis, bracket, dash, cohesion, ambiguity

**Year 6** - subject, object, active, passive, synonym, antonym, ellipsis, hyphen, colon, semi-colon, bullet points

**Adjective** Adjectives give us more information about nouns.

For example: A tall giraffe. The weather grew cold.

**Adverb** Most adverbs, as their name suggests, tell us more about verbs. Adverbs like these are often formed by adding '-ly' to an adjective. For example: The troll ate ravenously. The adverb 'ravenously' tells you how the troll was eating.

A few adverbs modify adjectives. For example: The map is very old. The adverb 'very' tells you how old it is.

**Apostrophe eg ' ' Apostrophes have two uses:**

- to indicate a missing letter or letters in a shortened word. For example: didn't (did not); we'd (we would).

- to show what someone or something owns or possesses. There is no apostrophe in ordinary plurals like tomatoes and videos. For example: the extraterrestrial's toenails (the toenails of the extraterrestrial)

When the noun is plural and already ends in s, you add an apostrophe by itself. For example: the cities' cathedrals; in three weeks' time.

When a person's name ends in s, you add an apostrophe followed by s if you normally say an extra s in speaking. But you just add an apostrophe by itself when you do not normally say the s in speaking. For example: St Thomas's Hospital; Achilles' armour.

**Clause** A clause is a part of a sentence that has its own verb.

**Main clause** A sentence can contain one or more main clauses, linked by a conjunction such as and, but, or, or yet, or by a semicolon. For example: We approached cautiously; the lioness was beginning to stir.

**Subordinate clause** A subordinate clause begins with a subordinating conjunction such as because if or when, and it can come before or after the main clause. For example: Because they eat aphids, ladybirds are useful in the garden.

**Relative clause** A relative clause explains or describes something that has just been mentioned, and is introduced by that, which, who, whom, whose, when, or where. A relative clause can either restrict meaning: For example: Of all Tolkien's books, the one which I prefer is The Hobbit. Or it can simply add further information, in which case you put a comma before it: For example: The book, which Tolkien wrote for his children, was an instant success.

**Comma** eg , Commas are used:

- to mark a pause in a sentence, especially to separate a subordinate clause from the main clause. For example: When the howling stopped, we ventured out from the cave.
- to separate items in a list or series. For example: I've packed a bikini, flippers, snorkel, and a periscope.
- in pairs before and after the name of someone who is being introduced or described. For example: The author, Roald Dahl, once lived here.
- to mark a pause in a compound sentence. For example: The film is rated 15, but it's not that scary.

**Command** A command or exclamation is a sentence ending with an exclamation mark. For example: Come and see the ice beginning to thaw!

**Conjunction** Conjunctions are used to join words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. For example: and, but, for, or, neither, nor, yet, although, because, if, until, unless, when, where, while, whereas.

**Coordinating conjunctions** Coordinating conjunctions join words or clauses which are of equal importance in a sentence. They form compound sentences. For example: and, but, for, or, neither, nor, yet (Would you prefer tea and biscuits, or coffee and cake?)

**Subordinating conjunctions** Subordinating conjunctions are used to link a main and a dependent clause. They are used to form complex sentences. For example: although, because, if, until, unless, when, where, while, whereas (Mira felt brave because she had her lucky pebble.)

**Connective** Connectives are used to link ideas in a piece of writing. They often occur at the start of a sentence and connect it with a previous sentence or paragraph. For example: moreover, nevertheless, finally, furthermore, and, thus (Nevertheless, he still remains popular with his millions of fans and continues to have hit records all over the world.)

**Consonant** Every letter in the English alphabet that is not a vowel.

**Ellipsis** eg ... An ellipsis is used to show that one or more words have been missed out or that a sentence is not finished. For example: "No! Don't tell Dad about the ..."

**Exclamation mark** eg ! You use an exclamation mark to indicate shouting, surprise, or excitement in direct speech. For example: 'Stop! Don't drink! The goblet is poisoned!'

It can also be used to express surprise, alarm, or excitement in a narrative. For example: The sun was coming up. She must hurry! Soon the spell would wear off!

**Full stop eg** . A full stop shows where a sentence ends, when the sentence is neither a question nor an exclamation. For example: Our story begins in 1914, on the eve of the First World War.

Full stops go within quotation marks in direct speech. For example: He said, 'I'll meet you outside the cinema.'

Full stops go within parentheses, when these surround a complete sentence. For example: The waiter arrived with a plate of toast. (I had ordered waffles.)

**Homophone** A noun with the same sound as another. For example: son and sun

**Hyphen eg** - Hyphens connect two or more words which make up a compound noun or adjective. For example: close-up; an ultra-huge sandwich.

**Inverted commas eg** ' ' ' ' Inverted commas occur in pairs and can surround a single word or phrase, or a longer piece of text. For example: 'Look!' said a voice behind me. 'Look at the sky!' Inverted commas are also known as speech marks, quotation marks, or (informally) quotes. Pairs of quotation marks can be single ('...') or double ("..."), but are never mixed.

**Mnemonics** Memory joggers such as a rhyme, a phrase or a shape. For example, seeing a dinosaur in the shape of a letter d to help your child to associate the dinosaur with the letter and sound d.

**Noun** Nouns are used to name people, places, or things and tell you who or what a sentence is about

**Common noun** Common nouns name people or things in general. Common nouns only begin with a capital letter when they start a sentence. For example: dancer, lizard, sandwich, television.

**Proper noun** Proper nouns give the name of a specific person, place or thing. Proper nouns always begin with a capital letter. For example: Max, Antarctica, Hallowe'en, Friday.

**Collective noun** Collective nouns name groups of people or things. For example: a team of athletes, a herd of sheep, a swarm of bees.

**Abstract noun** An abstract noun is a thing that cannot be seen or touched, such as an idea, a quality or a feeling. For example: happiness, truth, friendship.

**Phonemes** The smallest unit of sounds in a word represented by letters/ groups of letters.

**Pronoun** Pronouns are used to replace a noun in a sentence or clause, and help to avoid having to repeat words.

**Personal pronouns** Personal pronouns replace the name of a person or thing. When the pronoun is the subject of the clause: For example: I, you, he, she, it, we, they (Zoe and Bill are coming to the concert. She's got a ticket, but he hasn't.)

**When the pronoun is the object:** For example: me, you, him, her, it, us, them (The guards were following us and we were unable to shake them off.)

**Reflexive pronouns** Reflexive pronouns refer back to the thing the clause is about. For example: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves (Most baby birds are unable to feed themselves. I wanted to see for myself what all the fuss was about.)

**Interrogative pronouns** Interrogative pronouns are used to form questions. For example: what, who, whom, whose (What is happening? Who wants some ice cream? Whose is this?)

**Punctuation** Punctuation is the use of special marks to make a piece of writing easier to read and understand. Punctuation marks show divisions and connections between sentences, clauses, or individual words.

**Question mark eg ?** Question marks are used to mark a sentence that is a question. Question marks usually come at the end of a sentence. For example: Are there wild animals in this wood?

**Question** A question is a sentence which ends with a question mark. For example: When would the ice begin to thaw?

**Sentence** A sentence is a group of words that contains a verb. It should make sense on its own. In writing, a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark. It can contain just one clause, or several clauses joined by conjunctions or punctuation.

**Simple sentence** A simple sentence consists of one main clause. For example: The cat is sleeping.

**Compound sentence** A compound sentence consists of two or more main clauses joined by conjunctions such as and or but. For example: The cat is sleeping but the dog is awake.

**Complex sentence** A complex sentence contains a main clause and at least one other clause. The two clauses are joined by conjunctions such as although

**Semicolon eg ;** You use a semicolon to mark a break in a sentence that is longer, or more important, than a break made with a comma: For example: The castle was desolate; no one had lived there for three centuries or more.

Semicolons can separate a series of connected clauses introduced by a colon. For example: There were three clues: there was mud on the carpet; the door had been forced; and the air in the room smelled of fish.

A single semicolon can also separate two contrasting or balancing clauses. For example: You bring cups and plates; I'll bring juice and sandwiches.

**Tense** The form of a verb that shows when something happens in the past, present and future.

**Present tense** For example: I am walking. **Past tense** For example: I have walked. **Future tense** For example: I will walk.

**Verb** A verb can describe an action or process (for example: dive, chew, heal, thaw), a feeling or state of mind (for example: worry, think, know, believe), or a state (for example: be, remain). A sentence usually contains at least one verb.

**Vowels** The letters a, e, i, o, u in the English alphabet.

(Source: [www.oxfordowl.co.uk](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk))

## Spelling and Grammar talk for KS2 parents

### Difficult spellings

- Is it successful or successful?
- Is it ingredients or ingrediants?

### The Alphabet System

- 26 letters creating 44 phonemes in 144 combinations form about half a million words in current use.
- 21 consonants; spoken English uses 24 consonant sounds, so the match between how we say a consonant and how we write it is usually predictable.

### The Alphabet System

- There are five vowel letters:
- a, e, i, o, u. Sometimes 'y' does the job of a vowel as in 'my'.
- However, there are twenty spoken vowel sounds, for example the long 'a' sound is represented in a variety of ways: e.g. ai, a-e, ea, ay, eigh.

### Phonic knowledge and spelling

- Phonics, knowledge of letter/ sound correspondence. Long and short vowels, as in lock, look, segmenting into syllables and blending.
- Spelling patterns and conventions – how the consonant doubles after a short vowel when adding 'ing', as in skip/skipping. Changing verbs into past tense by adding 'ed', walk/ walked.
- Homophones – same sound different spelling and meaning.
- Phonological knowledge – syllables and rhymes.
- Skills are gradually revised and built upon in each year group.
- Spelling investigations are carried out rather than lists of spelling given out. This ensures that all learners are catered for rather than those with good sight recognition.

### Links between spelling and handwriting.

- Knowledge of letter strings can be taught through handwriting, building up muscle memory.
- Grouping families of words with similar letter strings together e.g. 'ake' take, make, cake, lake. Use of rhyming words. Can a consonant or vowel be changed?

### What are root words?

- Root words are words that make sense by themselves e.g. 'agree'.
- A root word can have a prefix added e.g. dis-agree (dis meaning opposite).
- A root word can also have a suffix e.g. dis – agree-ment.

### Root Words

It is important for children to be able to identify the root word in a spelling. Then they can think about the spelling of the pre-fix and suffix e.g. en joy able.

The root word is 'joy' with prefix and suffix adding to make the word enjoyable.

If we look at the root word hope and turn it into hopeless the learners have to remember that the root word in this case remains unchanged before adding the suffix.

### Grammar

- Grammar is taught as a modular system and skills gradually build. Teachers model the writing to demonstrate what a 'good' piece of work looks like.

It enables the children to rehearse the language.

- Link key ideas and punctuation to actions.
- Rehearsing the language enables the children to scaffold their writing.

Grammar

**In May 2013 the Department for Education introduced a new English grammar, punctuation and spelling test.**

**The test concentrates on four key areas:**

- spelling
- punctuation
- grammar
- vocabulary

Previously grammar has been a marked element within the pupil's writing.

One of our main school aims this year is the teaching of spelling and grammar throughout both key stages.

### **KS2 Grammar Test**

- Pupils should be taught:
- how written standard English varies in formality, for example the difference between a letter to a friend and a report for display.
- Word classes and the grammatical function of words, including nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and articles.
- The grammar of complex sentences, including clauses phrases and connectives.
- The features of different types of sentence including statements, questions and commands.

### **Spelling**

- Pupils need to be able to proofread-check for spelling mistakes, punctuation errors and repetitions.
- To sound out phonemes.
- Analyse words into syllables and other known words.
- To apply knowledge of spelling conventions e.g. i.e. except after c.
- Use knowledge of common letter strings, visual patterns and analogies.
- Check their spelling, revise and build on their knowledge of words and patterns.
- Pupils should learn the relevance of word families, roots and origins of words.

### **Punctuation and Handwriting**

- Pupils should be taught to proof read.
- To use punctuation marks correctly.
- Write legibly with increasing fluency and speeds.
- To use different forms of handwriting for different purposes e.g. label diagrams, neat hand for finished presented work.

## Sources & Further Reading

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/260491/PRIMARY\\_national\\_curriculum\\_-\\_English\\_RS2.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/260491/PRIMARY_national_curriculum_-_English_RS2.pdf)

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