**Punctuation Marks**

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| **Punctuation Mark** | **Name** | **Example** |
| [full stop or period](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-full-stop-period.htm) | **full stop or period** | I like English. |
| [comma](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-comma.htm) | [**comma**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-comma.htm) | I speak English, French and Croatian. |
| [semi-colon](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-semi-colon.htm) | [**semi-colon**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-semi-colon.htm) | I don't often go swimming; I prefer to play tennis. |
| [colon](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-colon.htm) | [**colon**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-colon.htm) | You have two choices: finish the work today or lose the contract. |
| [hyphen](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-hyphen.htm) | [**hyphen**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-hyphen.htm) | This is a rather out-of-date book. |
| [dash](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-dash.htm) | [**dash**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-dash.htm) | In each town—London, Paris and Rome—we stayed in youth hostels. |
| [question mark](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-question-mark.htm) | [**question mark**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-question-mark.htm) | Where is Shangri-La? |
| [exclamation mark](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-exclamation-mark.htm) | [**exclamation mark**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-exclamation-mark.htm) **exclamation point (AmE)** | "Help!" she cried. "I'm drowning!" |
| [slash or forward slash](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-slash.htm) | [**slash, forward slash or oblique**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-slash.htm) | Please press your browser's Refresh/Reload button. |
| [backslash](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-backslash.htm) | [**backslash**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-backslash.htm) | C:\Users\Files\jse.doc |
| double quotation marks | [**double quotation marks**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-quotation-marks.htm) | "I love you," she said. |
| single quotation marks | [**single quotation marks**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-quotation-marks.htm) | 'I love you,' she said. |
| apostrophe | [**apostrophe**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-apostrophe.htm) | This is John's car. |
| underline | [**underline**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-underline.htm) | Have you read War and Peace? |
| underscore | [**underscore**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-underscore.htm) | bin\_lad@cia.gov |
| round brackets | [**round brackets**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-round-brackets.htm) | I went to Bangkok (my favourite city) and stayed there for two weeks. |
| square brackets | [**square brackets**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-square-brackets.htm) | The newspaper reported that the hostages [most of them French] had been released. |
| ellipsis | [**ellipsis mark**](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-ellipsis.htm) | One happy customer wrote: "This is the best program...that I have ever seen." |

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| Full Stop or Period |  |

1. Use a full stop at the end of a sentence:

* The man arrived. He sat down.

2. Use full stops with abbreviations (in an abbreviation the last letter of the word and of the abbreviation are not the same):

* Co. (Company)
* etc. (et cetera)
* M.P. (Member of Parliament)

3. Do not use full stops with contractions (in a contraction the last letter of the word and of the contraction are the same):

* Ltd (Limited)
* Dr (Doctor)
* St (Saint)

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| Comma |  |

A comma in writing is like a pause inside a sentence when speaking. We use commas **inside** sentences. Commas separate parts of a sentence into logical elements. Commas have no meaning, but they help us to see the structure and therefore the meaning of the sentence.

Put a space **after** a comma. Do not put a space before a comma.

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| xxx, xxx | **correct** |
| ~~xxx ,xxx~~ | incorrect |
| ~~xxx , xxx~~ |

1. Use a comma between items in a series or **list**. In a sentence, the last two items usually do not need a comma between them as they are separated by "and". However, if one or both of the last two items are long, a comma may be useful.

* **coffee**, **tea**, **sugar**, **milk**, **eggs**, **butter**, **salt**
* My favourite sports are **football**, **rugby**, **swimming**, **boxing** and **golf**.
* John was wearing **blue jeans**, **black shoes**, **his brand new white shirt**, and **a brown and green cap**.

2. Use a comma between three or more **adjectives** or **adverbs**.

* I like the **old**, **brown**, **wooden** table.
* He bought an **old**, **red**, **open-top** Volkswagen.
* He ran **quickly**, **quietly** and **effortlessly**.

3. For **two adjectives**, use a comma where you could use "and".

* It was a **short**, **simple** film. (It was a short and simple film.)
* I have a big black dog. (~~I have a big and black dog.~~)

4. Use a comma for **numbers** over 999. (In English, commas separate thousands and periods separate decimals. Note that some languages use the opposite [system](http://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/numbers.htm).)

* 1,000 (one thousand)
* 1,569
* $73,050.75
* 2,000,000
* 3,400,500
* 10.5 (ten point five *or* ten and a half) - note the use of the [period](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-full-stop-period.htm), not comma

5. Use a comma for **addresses**, some **dates**, and **titles** following a name.

* 911 Avenue Mansion, Petchburi Road, Bangkok, 10400, Thailand
* Los Angeles, California
* November 4, 1948 (but 4 November 1948)
* Fred Ling, Professor of English

6. Use a comma before or after **direct speech**. Do not use a comma for reported speech.

* He said, "**I love you**."
* "**I love you**," he said.
* He told her that he loved her.

7. Use a comma before a **coordinating conjunction** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) to join two independent clauses. If the independent clauses are short and well-balanced, a comma is optional.

* He didn't want to go, **but** he went anyway.
* I want to work as an interpreter, **so** I am studying Russian at university.
* She is kind so she helps people.

8. Use commas for **parenthetical elements**. A "parenthetical element" is any part of a sentence that can be removed without changing the real meaning of the sentence.

* John Geton, **who is chairman of the company**, is quite old.
* Andrew, **my wife's brother**, cannot come.
* Andrew (my wife's brother) cannot come.
* The objective, **to find peace in both countries**, is hard to reach.

9. Use a comma after an **introductory element**. A comma is optional for short, simple introductory elements.

* **Rushing to catch the flight**, he forgot to take his phone.
* **As the year came to an end**, he realised the days were getting shorter.
* By evening we were getting worried.
* **After a hefty meal cooked by his host's wife**, he went to sleep.
* After a snack he went to sleep.

10. **Sentence adverbs** (words like however, unfortunately, surprisingly that modify a whole sentence) often require one or two commas, depending on their position in the sentence.

* **However**, Anthony did arrive.
* Anthony, **however**, did arrive.
* We were, **unfortunately**, too late.
* He had, **not surprisingly**, lost his temper.

11. An **adverbial clause** often needs a comma when it comes at the beginning of a sentence (but not at the end of a sentence).

* **If I win the lottery**, I will buy a castle.
* I will buy a castle **if I win the lottery**.

12. Do not use a comma to separate two complete sentences. In this case, use a full stop (period) or semi-colon.

* Ram wants to go out. Anthony wants to stay home.
* ~~Ram wants to go out, Anthony wants to stay home.~~

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| Tara, Ram and Anthony enjoyed their holiday, which they spent in Rio Claro, Trinidad, from December 17, 2010 to January 6, 2011. Unfortunately, although the weather was good, if rather hot, it rained a lot during their last week. Ravi, Tara's uncle, said, "When I was young we had very little rain, but now we have a lot of rain." Ravi, a wealthy, good-looking man, lives in the north of the island. |

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| quotemark | I have spent most of the day putting in a comma and the rest of the day taking it out. |
|  | Oscar Wilde |

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| Semi-colon |  |

1. We sometimes use a semi-colon instead of a full stop or period. This is to separate sentences that are grammatically independent but that have closely connected meaning.

* Josef likes coffee; Mary likes tea.
* Tara is a good speaker; she speaks very clearly.
* You did your best; now let's hope you pass the exam.
* Ram wants to go out; Anthony wants to stay home.

Note that in the above examples it is **not** correct to use a comma instead of the semi-colon.

2. Use a semi-colon as a kind of "super comma". When we have a list of items, we usually separate the items with commas. If the list is complicated, we may prefer to use semi-colons in some cases.

* ABC Investments has offices in five locations: Kensington, London; Brighton & Hove; and Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester.
* Rental cars must be returned on time; with a full tank of petrol; in undamaged condition; and at the same location as they were collected from.

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| Colon |  |

The job of the colon is simple: to introduce.

1. Use a colon to introduce a **list**:

* There are three countries in North America: Mexico, the USA and Canada.
* We can see many things in the sky at night: the moon, stars, planets, comets, planes and even satellites.

2. Actually, you can use a colon to introduce a **single item**, especially when you want to emphasize that item:

* We were all waiting for the hero of the evening: John.
* There is one thing that he will not accept: stupidity.
* The job of the colon is simple: to introduce.

3. Use a colon to introduce **direct speech** or a **quotation**:

* He stood up and said loudly: "Ladies and Gentlemen, please be seated."
* John whispered in my ear: "Have you seen Andrea?"
* As Confucius once wrote: "When words lose their meaning, people lose their freedom."

4. Use a colon to introduce an **explanation**:

* We had to cancel the party: too many people were sick.
* There is no need to rush: the meeting will be starting one hour late.

5. Use a colon to introduce **examples**, as shown above. For example, item 1 above reads "Use a colon to introduce a list" and ends with a colon followed by two example sentences.

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| Hyphen |  |

A hyphen is a very short horizontal line between words.

Note that there is **no** space between a hyphen and the character on either side of it.

Do not confuse a hyphen (-) with a [dash](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-dash.htm) (-), which is longer.

The rules about hyphens are not fixed. The points below are guidelines rather than rules.

1. Use a hyphen to join words to show that their meaning is linked in some way:

* book-case (or bookcase)
* race-horse (or racehorse)
* pick-me-up

2. Use a hyphen to make compound modifiers **before** nouns:

* a blue-eyed boy (but The boy was blue eyed.)
* the well-known actor (but The actor is well known.)
* their four-year-old son (but Their son is four years old.)

3. Use a hyphen with certain prefixes. The prefixes all-, ex-, and self- usually need a hyphen:

* all-inclusive
* ex-wife
* self-control

When a prefix comes before a capitalized word, use a hyphen:

* non-English

When a prefix is capitalized, use a hyphen:

* A-frame

4. Use a hyphen when writing numbers 21 to 99, and fractions:

* twenty-one
* one hundred and sixty-five
* two-thirds

5. Use a hyphen to show that a word has been broken at the end of a line ([hyphenation](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/hyphenation.htm)):

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| The directors requested that a more **conven- ient** time be arranged. |

6. Use a hyphen with "suspended compounds". When we use several very similar compounds together, it may not be necessary to repeat the last part of the compound:

* They need to employ more full- and part-time staff. (not They need to employ more full-time and part-time staff.)
* This rule applies only to 12-, 13- and 14-year olds. (not This rule applies only to 12-year olds, 13-year olds and 14-year olds.)

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| Dash |  |

A dash is a horizontal line that shows a pause or break in meaning, or that represents missing words or letters. Note that dashes are rather informal and should be used carefully in writing. Dashes are often used informally instead of commas, colons and brackets. A dash may or may not have a space on either side of it.

Do not confuse a dash (—) with a [hyphen](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-hyphen.htm) (-), which is shorter.

1. Use a dash to show a pause or break in meaning in the middle of a sentence:

* My brothers—Richard and John—are visiting Hanoi. (Could use[*commas*](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-comma.htm).)
* In the 15th century—when of course nobody had electricity—water was often pumped by hand.(Could use brackets.)

2. Use a dash to show an afterthought:

* The 1st World War was supposed to be the world's last war—the war to end war.
* I attached the photo to my email—at least I hope I did!

3. Use a dash like a [colon](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-colon.htm) to introduce a list:

* There are three places I'll never forget—Paris, Bangkok and Hanoi.
* Don't forget to buy some food—eggs, bread, tuna and cheese.

4. Use a dash to show that letters or words are missing:

* They are really f––––d up. (Typically used for offensive words.)
* I will look ––––– the children. (Typically used in "missing word" questions.)

In fact, there are two kinds of dash:

* the en-dash (–), which is the width of the letter "n"
* and the em-dash (—), which is the width of the letter "m"

However, the difference between them is rather technical and mainly of value to typographers. The dash is a convenient and easy mark to use in hand-writing. But it is often difficult to find on a keyboard and for this reason some people use the easier-to-find but shorter [hyphen](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-hyphen.htm) (-) when word-processing.

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| Question Mark |  |

The main function of a question mark is to indicate a question or query.

1. Use a question mark at the end of all direct questions:

* What is your name?
* How much money did you transfer?
* Did you send euro or dollars?

2. Use a question mark after a [tag question](http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verbs-questions-tag.htm):

* You're French, aren't you?
* Snow isn't green, is it?
* He should go and see a doctor, shouldn't he?

3. Don't forget to use a question mark at the end of a sentence that really is a direct question:

* How else would I get there, after all?
* What if I said to you, "I don't love you any more"?
* "Who knows when I'll die?", he asked rhetorically.

4. In very **informal** writing (personal letter or email), people sometimes use a question mark to turn a statement into a question:

* See you at 9pm?

In the same situation, they may use two or three question marks together to show that they are not sure about something:

* I think you said it would cost $10???

5. Do **not** use a question mark after an indirect or reported question:

* The teacher asked them what their names were. (What are your names?)
* John asked Mary if she loved him. (Do you love me?)
* I'm wondering if she's coming. (Is she coming?)

6. Many polite requests or instructions are made in the form of a question. But because they are not really questions, they do **not** take a question mark:

* Could you please send me your catalogue.
* Would all first-class and business-class passengers now start boarding.

7. Be careful with titles and abbreviations when question marks are involved:

* "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" was a play before it was a film.
* Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf? was a play before it was a film.
* Have you seen the film "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?"?
* Have you seen the film Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf??
* Have you ever been to L.A.?

Note that there should be **no** space immediately before a question mark.

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| Exclamation Mark Called **Exclamation Point** in American English |  |

An exclamation mark usually shows strong feeling, such as surprise, anger or joy. Using an exclamation mark when writing is rather like shouting or raising your voice when speaking. Exclamation marks are most commonly used in writing quoted speech. You should avoid using exclamation marks in formal writing, unless absolutely necessary.

1. Use an exclamation mark to indicate strong feelings or a raised voice in speech:

* She shouted at him, "Go away! I hate you!"
* He exclaimed: "What a fantastic house you have!"
* "Good heavens!" he said, "Is that true?"
* "Help!"
* "Shut up!"
* "Stop!"

2. Many [interjections](http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/interjections.htm) need an exclamation mark:

* "Hi! What's new?"
* "Oh! When are you going?"
* "Ouch! That hurt."

3. A non-question sentence beginning with "what" or "how" is often an exclamation and requires an exclamation mark:

* What idiots we are! (We are such idiots.)
* How pretty she looked in that dress! (She looked very pretty in that dress.)

4. In very **informal** writing (personal letter or email), people sometimes use two or more exclamation marks together:

* I met John yesterday. He is so handsome!!!
* Remember, don't be late!!
* I'll never understand this language!!!!

Remember, try to **avoid** exclamation marks in formal writing such as an essay or business letter.

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| Slash |

The slash (/) is also known as: forward slash, stroke, oblique. You should use the slash with care in formal writing.

1. A slash is often used to indicate "or":

* Dear Sir/Madam (Sir or Madam)
* Please press your browser's Refresh/Reload button. (Refresh or Reload)
* The speech will be given by President/Senator Clinton. (President Clinton or Senator Clinton)
* Mary will eat cake and/or fruit. (Mary will eat cake, or Mary will eat fruit, or Mary will eat cake and fruit.)

Do not over-use the slash to indicate "or". It can suggest laziness on the part of the writer. The "and/or" construction is widely considered to be very bad form.

2. Use a slash for fractions:

* 1/2 (one half)
* 2/3 (two thirds)
* 9/10 (nine tenths)

3. Use a slash to indicate "per" in measurements of speed, prices etc:

* The speed limit is 100 km/h. (kilometres per hour)
* He can type at 75 w/m. (words per minute)
* The eggs cost $3/dozen. ($3 per dozen)
* They charge €1.50/litre for petrol. (€1.50 per litre)

4. People often use a slash in certain abbreviations:

* This is my a/c number. (account)
* John Brown, c/o Jane Green (care of)
* n/a (not applicable, not available)
* w/o (without)

5. A slash is often used in dates to separate day, month and year:

* On credit card: Expires end 10/15 (October 2015)
* He was born on 30/11/2007. (30th November 2007 - BrE)
* It was invented on 11/30/2007. (November 30th, 2007 - AmE)

6. The slash is used to separate parts of a website address (url) on the Internet, and to separate folders on some computer systems:

* http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-slash.htm
* file:///Users/mac/tara/photos/image.jpg

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| Backslash |  |

The backslash is **not** really an English punctuation mark. It is a typographical mark used mainly in computing. It is called a "backslash" because it is the reverse of the [slash (/)](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-slash.htm) or forward slash.

The backslash is used in several computer systems, and in many programming languages such as C and Perl. It is commonly seen in Windows computers:

* C:\Users\Win\Files\jse.doc

Do not confuse the backslash (\) with the slash (/) or forward slash.

Although it is not really an English punctuation mark, the backslash is included on these pages for completeness.

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| Quotation Marks (double, single) |  |  |

We use quotation marks to show (or mark) the beginning and end of a word or phrase that is somehow special or comes from outside the text that we are writing. Quotation marks can be double ("...") or single ('...') - that is really a matter of style (but see below for more about this).

Quotation marks are also called "quotes" or "inverted commas".

1. Use quotation marks around the title or name of a book, film, ship etc:

* The second most popular book of all time, "Quotations from the Works of Mao Tse-tung", has sold over 800,000,000 copies and was formerly known as "The Red Book".
* 'Titanic' is a 1997 movie directed by James Cameron about the sinking of the ship 'Titanic'.

Note that in the above case, we may use "italics" instead of quotation marks. So the above examples would then appear as:

* The second most popular book of all time, Quotations from the Works of Mao Tse-tung, has sold over 800,000,000 copies and was formerly known as The Red Book.
* Titanic is a 1997 movie directed by James Cameron about the sinking of the ship Titanic.

Obviously, the use of italics is not possible in handwriting or with old-style typewriters.

2. We use quotation marks around a piece of text that we are quoting or citing, usually from another source:

* In The Cambridge Encyclopedia of The English Language, David Crystal argues that punctuation "plays a critical role in the modern writing system".

3. Use quotation marks around dialogue or direct speech:

* It was a moonlit night. James opened the door and stepped onto the balcony, followed by Mary. They stood in silence for a few moments, looking at the moon. Then Mary turned to him and said: "Do you love me, James?"

4. Use quotation marks around a word or phrase that we see as slang or jargon:

* The police were called to a "disturbance" - which in reality was a pretty big fight.

5. Use quotation marks around a word or phrase that we want to make "special" in some way:

* Note that sometimes we use "italics" instead of quotation marks.

### Double or single quotation marks?



Quotation marks can be double ("-") or single ('-'). If we want to use quotation marks inside quotation marks, then we use single inside double, or double inside single.

* He said to her: "I thought 'Titanic' was a good film."
* He said to her: 'I thought "Titanic" was a good film.'

### Punctuation inside or outside final quotation mark?

If the quoted words end with a full stop, then the full stop goes inside the quotation marks. If the quoted words do not end with a full stop, then the full stop goes outside the quotation marks:

* He said: "I love you."
* She has read "War and Peace".

Note that in US English, the full stop usually goes inside the quotation marks in all cases:

* He said: "I love you."
* She has read "War and Peace."

However, US English adopts the British style for question marks and exclamation marks:

* He said: "Do you love me?"
* Have you read "War and Peace"?
* Can you imagine? He has never read "War and Peace"!

### How do we indicate quotation marks when speaking?

People may say "quote, unquote" or "open quotes, close quotes" when reading aloud texts containing quotation marks:

* On page two it says, quote, Now is the time to invest, unquote.
* On page two it says, open quotes, Now is the time to invest, close quotes.

"Quote, unquote" may also be said informally in front of rather than around the quoted words:

* The brochure describes the car as, quote, unquote, total luxury.

"Quote, unquote" is sometimes used to mock or show disapproval or disbelief:

* Then he arrived with his quote, unquote new girlfriend.

People sometimes say "in quotes" (often putting up their two hands with two fingers extended on each hand, like quotation marks), indicating that the words came from another source, or in a mocking way, or suggesting that they don't quite believe what they have just said:

* Then he arrived with his new girlfriend, in quotes.

**Please note:** There are some differences in the use of quotation marks between various varieties of English such as British English or American English. Anyone seeking guidance at an advanced level is recommended to consult a style guide (often included in good dictionaries) for their particular variety.

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| Apostrophe |  |

1. Use an apostrophe in **possessive** forms:

* the ball of the boy > the boy's ball
* Tara's sister
* my friend's mother
* New York's nightmare scenario
* the moon's phases

2. Use an apostrophe in **contracted** forms (the apostrophe shows that letters have been left out):

* cannot > can't
* they have > they've
* I would (*or* I had) > I'd
* it is (*or* it has) > it's
* who is > who's

Certain words are sometimes written with an apostrophe (to show that they are really a shortened form of the original, longer word):

* influenza > 'flu (*or* flu)
* telephone > 'phone (*or* phone)

Some people use an apostrophe when the first two figures of a year are left out:

* 1948 > '48

3. You can use an apostrophe to show the **plural** of letters and numbers:

* You should dot your i's and cross your t's.
* Do you like music from the 1950's?

You can use an apostrophe to show a plural form for words that are not normally plural:

* Your plan is good, even if there are lots of but's in it.

Possessive pronouns or determiners (except *one's*) do not use apostrophes. Do not confuse them with contractions. The following are typical mistakes:

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| **Wrong** | **Right** |
| It's value is | Its value is It's going to rain |
| Who's are these? | Whose are these? Who's coming? |
| These are your's | These are yours |
| exception > | One's self-esteem |

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| Underline |  |

An underline is a horizontal line immediately below a piece of writing.

In handwriting, we traditionally use underlining to indicate emphasis:

Shopping:

bread

celery

parsley

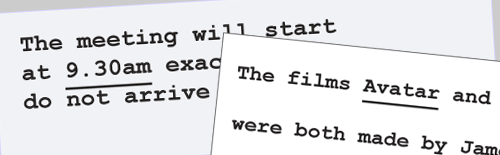
carrot

tofu

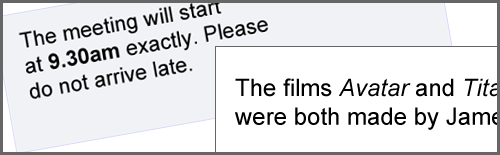
Don't forget the parsley!

Underline can be a noun and a verb. You can ask someone "to underline" something. ("Please underline all the errors.") In the above example, we can say that butter is "underlined". We can also use the term "underlining" in a more general sense. ("On most web pages, underlining is reserved for links.)

In typewriting, we can use underlining to show emphasis, and also things like titles of books and films, and names of ships.



However, in print and computer writing, we use underlining much less, partly because we have bold and italics to do a similar job.



In addition, with the development of the Internet and world wide web, web pages traditionally use underlining to indicate a link. As such, it is not good practice to use underline on web pages.

Underline is also called [underscore](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-underscore.htm), especially in American English.

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| Underscore |  |

Underscore is a line below text-level, and is typically used in email addresses, filenames and URLs, for example:

* my\_name@example.com
* image\_123.jpg
* http://www.englishclub.com/under\_score/

In American English, underscore can also mean [underline](http://www.englishclub.com/writing/punctuation-underline.htm).

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| Brackets/Round Brackets or Parentheses |

Round brackets are basically used to add extra information to a sentence. Look at these examples:

**British English  
() = brackets or round brackets  
  
American English  
() = parentheses**

1. explain or clarify
   * Tony Blair (the former British prime minister) resigned from office in 2007.
2. indicate "plural or singular"
   * Please leave your mobile telephone(s) at the door.
3. add a personal comment
   * Many people love parties (I don't).
4. define abbreviations
   * The matter will be decided by the IOC (International Olympic Committee).

Some grammarians believe that (whenever possible) we should use commas.  
Some grammarians believe that, whenever possible, we should use commas.

Remember that the full stop, exclamation mark or question mark goes after the final bracket (unless the brackets contain a complete sentence). Look at these examples:

* My car is in the drive (with the window open).
* I just had an accident with our new car. (Sssh! My husband doesn't know yet.)
* The weather is wonderful. (If only it were always like this!)
* The party was fantastic (as always)!
* Do you remember Johnny (my brother's friend)?
* Johnny came too. (Do you remember Johnny?) We had a great time.

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| Square Brackets or Brackets |

We typically use square brackets when we want to modify **another person's words**. Here, we want to make it clear that the modification has been made by us, not by the original writer. For example:

**British English  
[] = square brackets  
  
American English  
[] = brackets**

1. to add clarification:
   * The witness said: "He [the policeman] hit me."
2. to add information:
   * The two teams in the finals of the first FIFA Football World Cup were both from South America [Uruguay and Argentina].
3. to add missing words:
   * It is [a] good question.
4. to add editorial or authorial comment:
   * They will **not** be present [my emphasis].
5. to modify a direct quotation:
   * He "love[s] driving." (The original words were "I love driving.")

We also sometimes use square brackets for nesting, for example:

* Square brackets can also be nested (using square brackets [like these] inside round brackets).

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| Ellipsis Mark |

The ellipsis mark consists of three dots (periods). We use the ellipsis mark in place of missing words. If we intentionally omit one or more words from an original text, we replace them with an ellipsis mark.

**The ellipsis mark is also called a "suspension point" or "dot dot dot".**

* Suppose we want to quote "The film focussed on three English learners from Asia who were studying at university." Perhaps we want to omit "from Asia who were" to save space. So we write:  
    
  "The film focussed on three English learners...studying at university."  
    
  The new sentence still makes sense, but the ellipsis mark shows the reader that something is missing.

We sometimes also use an ellipsis mark to indicate a pause when someone is speaking, or an unfinished sentence. Look at these examples:

* She turned to James and said, "Darling, there is something...I need to tell you. I have never felt like...like this before."
* "It's not easy to explain. It's not..." Her voice trailed away as emotion welled up within her.

Do we use a space with an ellipsis mark? That is a question of style. Many style manuals recommend no space, like this:

* three English learners...studying at university
* It's not...

Others recommend using a space before and after an ellipsis mark, like this:

* three English learners ... studying at university
* It's not ...

The important thing is that you choose one style and use it consistently. Do not mix your styles.

