

Description of “Punctuation Through Practice”

“Punctuation Through Practice” is a simple explanation of how to use all punctuation marks so as to make your writing clear.

It is set out on full-size pages so that teachers may easily duplicate the exercises to use with their pupils. The exercises are simple for the most commonly used punctuation and would be suitable for primary grades.

As the punctuation required in the sentences becomes more complicated, of course, the sentences are more difficult to punctuate, but the explanations make the exercises interesting for more senior students and individuals such as secretaries and others interested in improving their writing.

Once an exercise has been completed, a check of the answers given will make it easy to understand where any errors were made.

PUNCTUATION THROUGH PRACTICE

By

Keith Cowan

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(.....) !! ---- !!

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Punctuation Through Practice takes the student through all of the punctuation devices in English and is planned so that only sections relevant to the individual need be studied: the young child, the English as a second language student, the senior student, and anyone who is still in doubt about some of the more complex uses of punctuation.

Punctuation has to do with the structure of sentences. It assists the reader to understand more easily what the writer is saying. Each punctuation mark performs a specific function and helps develop the meaning intended in the sentence. Good punctuation means clarity.

As you work through the practices, you will be shown the specific function each punctuation device performs and that each punctuation device is given a specific name. Each punctuation device has one and only one function, so once you are familiar with these functions, punctuation will become very easy to use correctly.

CONTENTS

- i. A punctuation device is given and its use is explained.
- ii. Examples of its use are given.
- iii. Exercises giving sentences to be punctuated using the device are given.
- iv. The correct punctuation for each exercise is given at the end of the book.

Beginning and end punctuation:

A capital letter is used to show the beginning of a sentence.

The period (.) shows the end of a statement sentence.

eg. All of the sentences written so far are statement sentences and show the period at their ends.

The question mark (?) shows the end of a question sentence.

eg. What time is it?

An exclamation mark (!) shows the end of a sentence expressing a strong emotion.

eg. Help, I'm drowning!

Exercise A: For each of the following sentences (statements, questions, and exclamations) re-write each sentence to show the necessary beginning and end punctuation.

eg. the supper is ready to serve The supper is ready to serve.

is supper ready Is supper ready?

look, the oven is on fire Look, the oven is on fire!

Notice how the changes in end punctuation alter the way in which each sentence must be read aloud in order to bring out the changes in meaning.

1. the last time I saw Peter was at the pool
2. he had a pool party for his birthday

3. did you jump off the high tower
4. what, do you think I'm crazy
5. no, I did, twice
6. who pushed you
7. megan, the first time, but then I jumped myself
8. guard, he's drowning
9. don't worry; I'll pull her out
10. are you alright, Megan

The Single Comma:

A single comma is used to replace a word or a number of words which have been omitted but which are easily understood.

eg. 1 The best swimmers in our club are John, Robert, Megan and Susan.

The single commas between John, Robert and Megan are easily seen to replace the “ands” which are understood. Without the single commas, the sentence structure would be unnecessarily repetitive:

The best swimmers in our club are John and Robert and Megan and Susan.

eg. 2. John and Megan swim freestyle; Susan and Robert, backstroke and fly.

In that sentence the single comma replaces “swim”.

Exercise B: Write out each of the following sentences and place a single comma where a word that is understood has been left out.

1. Our hockey coach couldn't decide whether to play Patrick Robert Cameron or Megan in goal.
2. Megan is not the only girl in our team; we also have Sue Hilary Tracy and Joan.
3. Megan plays goalie and defense; Sue right wing; Hilary and Tracy center and Joan defense with Megan.
4. The best boy players are Patrick Robert Sean Philip and Terry.
5. In our last five games, Terry scored five goals; Robert three; Patrick two goals and one assist; Sean and Phillip one goal each.

Review Exercises: In the review exercises, you will have to put in all the punctuation marks which have been left out: beginning and end punctuation, and single commas where understood words have been omitted.

Exercise C:

1. most students at our school enjoy football soccer basketball softball and swimming
2. which sport is the most popular
3. they are all popular, but I think the most popular would be either football soccer or swimming
4. i prefer swimming
5. no way
6. well, which do you prefer

7. soccer because it keeps you fit doesn't break any bones send you to hospital or cause you to miss school
8. you're smart
9. perhaps, but I am fit healthy cheerful with no broken bones
10. when I get out of hospital, I'm going to give up football play soccer and become a fit too

Exercise D:

1. In high school we will have to select the subjects we wish to study from quite a selection: English French Latin Chinese and Greek are just the languages we may study
2. isn't English a required subject
3. yes, it is
4. with English, I will study algebra geometry French history geography and physical education
5. what will you study
6. not algebra
7. there are many optional choices to make too, recreational options: sports activities choir band debating or school paper
8. how many options may we take
9. as many as you can handle
10. that's great

The Pair of Commas:

A “pair of commas” are used when the normal order of the sentence is disrupted by a word or group of words which is unnecessary for the formation of the sentence; that is, the element is BOTH disruptive and unnecessary.

The normal order of an English sentence is a subject followed by a predicate: the subject being what is spoken about in the sentence and the predicate, what is said about the subject.

e.g. Normal order:

The children laughed when they saw the clown’s big feet.

The essential sentence is “The children laughed.”

The unnecessary element is “when they saw the clown’s big feet”.

Note that the unnecessary words are not disruptive and so require no pair of commas. However, as it is placed in the next sentence it is BOTH disruptive and unnecessary and is required to be enclosed in a pair of commas.

The children, when they saw the clown’s big feet, laughed.

In this next arrangement of the sentence, one of the commas of the pair is understood just as the subject of a sentence such as “Help!” or “Silence, listen!” is understood.

(,)When they saw the clown’s big feet, the children laughed.

The comma before the sentence must be understood because it is quite clear that the comma after “feet” does not replace any words and so cannot be a single comma; it must be paired with the understood comma.

Exercise E: Write out each sentence and place a pair of commas where needed. If only one comma of a pair is needed, show the understood comma in brackets, thus (,). Some of the sentences are in normal order and so will require no commas to be added.

1. Our trip to the mountains because the roads were covered in ice had to be cancelled.
2. When the weather warmed up we set off again for the ski slopes.
3. Even though the weather was warmer the ski slopes were still very icy until they were groomed.
4. Robert did not go skiing with us because he had decided to spend his vacation on a warm, sunny beach getting a tan.
5. After I sprained my ankle on an icy slope my parents sent me to join Robert in the sun.
6. Robert although he was surprised when I came strolling along the sandy beach was soon teaching me to surf.
7. It was not possible for me to stand on a board, but I could ride one in a kneeling position.
8. Because I enjoyed the surf and sun so much I will be with Robert again next winter.
9. My parents having considered the idea of going with us decided to return to the ski slopes they have always loved.
10. We will spend Christmas together before we go our separate ways.

Review Exercise B: Rewrite these sentences and put in all the missing punctuation: beginning and end punctuation, single commas, pairs of commas.

1. my father mother brother sister and I all enjoy spending time at the beach during the summer
2. when the summer ends and turns to fall Father drives us to the mountains to see the fall leaves photograph any wild life we may see picnic beside the lake and collect colored leaves for my collection
3. we have a nature assignment at school each year to help us understand the need to take care of the environment: our rivers lakes and forests
4. to save using power during the summer we let in as much sunlight as possible use energy saving light bulbs and cook on the barbecue
5. father to save over using the furnace in the winter keeps the temperature set low makes us wear sweaters keep artificial logs burning in the fireplace and sleep under plenty of blankets
6. when we can afford it we will have a solar panel installed on the roof to generate some of our electricity for lighting heating and cooking
7. mother my sister and I often prepare delicious meals of salad fresh fruit and cold meats to save using the stove
8. if you have any energy saving ideas let us know so that we can try them too

Other Places Where the Pair of Commas Are Used:

A. The pair of commas are used when a name of a person or some thing is repeated in other words to make a point clearer:

e.g. John, my brother, is eleven years old on Saturday, the 23rd of March.

I climbed to the top of the Empire State Building, one of the tallest buildings in the world, in thirty-five minutes.

B. The pair of commas are used to set off commonly used but unnecessary and disruptive words such as:

however it seems to me on the other hand you could say

e.g. There are several things that we could do to solve our problem, however, if you want my suggestion you will appoint a new coach.

Perhaps you are right, but, on the other hand, I think we need a better training schedule with more time on the ice.

C. The pair of commas are used to set off descriptive phrases or clauses which merely describe but are not needed to identify the person or thing being described.

e.g. John, who has been a great help on our project, deserves to be awarded the prize. (Notice that John needs no identification so the descriptive clause is unnecessary and disruptive and so is set off by a pair of commas.)

The student who has been the most help on our project deserves to be awarded the prize. (Notice that “who has been the most help on our project” is necessary in this sentence to identify the student and so no commas are used.)

Exercise F: Write out each sentence and place a pair of commas where needed: where something is repeated in different words, where a commonly used but unnecessary word or phrase is used, or where an unnecessary description is given.

1. We have three very good goalies on our team however I think Jim is the best.
2. Then in fact we are in agreement that Jim should start as goalie in our first playoff game.
3. Doug who played excellent hockey in the last three games will have to sit this one out because of his injured knee.
4. The player who is in the best shape and ready to play will start tomorrow.
5. Jim is in my opinion the fittest and best player we have.
6. The Red Devils our main opposition are all fit and ready, but we will it seems to me be able to beat them in three straight games and move on to the finals.
7. Our experienced coach Matt Shaw thinks we can win the series , but unlike you he thinks it may take us the full five games.
8. Well that is his opinion, but come on we have been playing fantastic games for a young team.
9. It is not a good idea most would agree to under estimate your opposition.
10. Mark who has been our top scorer for our last two games is confident that other things being equal he will score well in the playoffs.

The Semicolon:

The semicolon is used to link together sentences which are closely related to make a compound sentence. The semicolon replaces a period.

e.g. It rained for a whole week; the town was flooded.

Some houses washed down river; others disappeared under the floodwaters.

Our team, the Tigers, scored three goals; our opponents, the Eagles, scored only two.

Exercise G: Write out the following pairs of simple sentences and place a semicolon to make them into one compound sentence.

1. The movie started early on Friday. We ran all the way to the theatre.
2. The car had a flat tire soon after we left home. Dad changed the wheel in no time.
3. When you have finished your homework, come and help with the dishes. The dishwasher is not working.
4. From the top of the hill, you could see the whole ski run. Dozens of skiers were enjoying the new snow.
5. We will be moving overseas for three years at the end of the term. Dad has been transferred by his company.
6. My sister is staying here with an aunt. She finishes her university degree this year.
7. I hope you are going to England. Remember I told you that we had a great time there.

8. No, we are going to be living in Moscow. It will be a real culture shock for all of us.
9. At least you'll be able to drive on the right hand side of the road. In England they drive on the left hand side.
10. That's great. I hope to learn to drive next year and come back with an international license.

The Comma with a Coordinating Conjunction: Another punctuation device used to link sentences together to make a compound sentence is the comma with a coordinating conjunction: (,and) (,but) (,or).

e.g. We have our best team ever this year. We are going to try hard to win the championship for the first time.

We have our best team ever this year, and we are going to try hard to win the championship for the first time.

e.g. We thought we had a real shot at the championship. We lost the final by one goal scored in the overtime period.

We thought we had a real shot at the championship, but we lost the final by one goal scored in the overtime period.

e.g. We will have to have more practice during the off season. We will not be a stronger team next season.

We will have to have more practice during the off season, or we will not be a stronger team next season.

Exercise H: Write out the following pairs of simple sentences and place a comma with a coordinating conjunction to make them into a compound sentence. Think carefully about the relationship between the sentences to decide whether it is an and, a but, or an or relationship.

1. It must rain before the end of the month. Our wheat crop will die off before it is ready to harvest.
2. There has been a little rain. It is not enough to save the wheat crop.
3. The crop has picked up a little. We have been able to harvest at least half the crop.

4. Our team needs a really strong goalie. We will lose again this year.
5. We have tried out four goalie prospects. One of the tryouts looks very promising.
6. If the team works well with our first choice for a new goalie, we will try him out in a game or two. If the team does not click with him, we will have to do some more searching.
7. We have found the perfect goalie for our team. Because of our terrific new player, we have another good chance at the championship this year.
8. If we win the semi-final, the final will be played on our home field. If we lose, it will be played away.
9. We won the final three years ago. There was a terrific celebration; every player was given a special jacket as a reward.
10. There was talk of some players leaving to play for other teams. We are all going to be back next year except for Gary who was seriously hurt in the final when he scored our winning goal.

The Colon: The colon (:) is used to introduce a clarification of what has just been stated.

e.g. We need to shop for some groceries: milk, bread, cereal, apples and bananas.

Two of our best players will miss the final because of their injuries: Ken has a sprained ankle; Mark, a cracked rib.

The Single Dash: The single dash (-) is the reverse of the colon. The clarifying information is given first and then its significance is stated.

e.g. Milk, bread, cereal, apples and bananas - these are the groceries we need from the store.

Ken has a sprained ankle; Mark, a cracked rib - they will have to miss the final.

Exercise I: Write out the following sentences and place either a colon (:) or a single dash (-) wherever needed.

1. We need to buy some supplies before you start school a backpack, colored pencils, exercise books, and a lunch bag .
2. I can't decide which breed of dog I prefer the German shepherd, a golden retriever or a Labrador.
3. Innoculations, proper food and plenty of exercise all dogs need these three essentials along with lots of love if they are to be good pets.
4. If we are to start the final with a strong attacking line we must begin with our best players Frank, Mark, Ken and Robert.
5. General Motors, Ford and Chrysler these are the big three U.S. car manufacturers.
6. G.M. makes three of the most popular brands the Chevrolet, Pontiac and Buick.

Parentheses and Pairs of Dashes: Like the pairs of commas which are used to set off a word or group of words which are unnecessary and disruptive, the pair of dashes and parentheses are also used to set off words or groups of words which are both unnecessary and disruptive.

The pairs of dashes are used to set off elements which are more unnecessary and more disruptive.

e.g. On the last albums, I've brought in Robert Randolph - how great is that? - Willie Nelson, the other end of that scale, and Tom Petty.

Construction worker Macario Lopez has lined up for four hours - along with brothers, children and nephews - to swap his cowboy boots for a pair of skates.

But anyone with a taste for history - or taste at all - might do better trolling the auction houses this month, where once-in-a-lifetime shopping opportunities abound.

Time: Dec. 24, 2007

The parentheses are used to set off elements which are most unnecessary and most disruptive because they have little or no grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence.

Parentheses:

e.g. The public gave Hollywood stars (and other famous or notorious folks) permission to fool round, with the proviso that we could watch.

Their mission is to introduce the program and offer to schedule an energy audit (approximately \$300) that can identify cost-effective renovations.

Time Feb.4, 2008

e.g. The First World War (1914-1918) was fought mainly in Europe.

Some Non-punctuation Symbols: These symbols do not affect or relate to the structure of the sentence.

The Abbreviation Point (.) Mr., Y.M.C.A.

The Hyphen (-) two-year-old, forty-seven

Underscoring (underline)

The Apostrophe (') can't = can not, won't = will not
Which in Old English was "woll not"

Three dots (...) mean that at this point certain parts have been left out of the original.

"To be or not to be ... that is the question."

The bar (/) is used only when poetry is written straight along like prose. A bar separates the lines of the poem.

"With swift, slow: sweet, sour; adazzle, dim; / He
fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: / Praise him.

Possessives: Old English was inflected to show possession as are other languages still. The "es" which showed possession in Old English becomes 's

Thus, for Singular Possession:

e.g. "mannes horse" becomes "man's horse"

"Jameses book" becomes "James's or James' book"

"boyes home" becomes "boy's home"

And, for Plural Possession:

“boyses homes” becomes “boys’ homes”

“girlses school” becomes “girls’ school”

Capital Letters: Capital letters which show the beginning of a sentence are punctuation. Other conventional uses of capital letters are not punctuation because they do not relate to sentence structure.

Solutions to the Exercises:

Exercise A:

1. The last time I saw Peter was at the pool.
2. He had a pool party for his birthday.
3. Did you jump off the high tower?
4. What, do you think I’m crazy!
5. No, I did, twice!
6. Who pushed you?
7. Megan, the first time, but then I jumped myself.
8. Guard, he’s drowning!
9. Don’t worry; I’ll pull her out.
10. Are you alright, Megan?

Exercise B:

1. Our hockey coach couldn't decide whether to play Patrick, Robert, Cameron or Megan in goal.
2. Megan is not the only girl in our team; we also have Sue, Hilary, Tracy and Joan.
3. Megan plays goalie and defense; Sue right wing; Hilary and Tracy, center and Joan, defense with Megan.
4. The best boy players are Patrick, Robert, Sean, Philip and Terry.
5. In our last five games, Terry scored five goals; Robert, three; Patrick, two goals and one assist; Sean and Phillip, one goal each.

Exercise C:

1. Most students at our school enjoy football, soccer, basketball, softball and swimming.
2. Which sport is the most popular?
3. They are all popular, but I think the most popular would be either football, soccer or swimming.
4. I prefer swimming.
5. No way!
6. Well, which do you prefer?
7. Soccer because it keeps you fit, doesn't break any bones, send you to hospital or cause you to miss school.

8. You're smart!
9. Perhaps, but I am fit, healthy, cheerful, with no broken bones
10. When I get out of hospital, I'm going to give up football, play soccer and become a fit too.

Exercise D:

1. In high school we will have to select the subjects we wish to study from quite a selection: English, French, Latin, Chinese and Greek are just the languages we may study.
2. Isn't English a required subject?
3. Yes, it is.
4. With English, I will study algebra, geometry, French, history, geography and physical education.
5. What will you study?
6. Not algebra!
7. There are many optional choices to make too, recreational options: sports activities, choir, band, debating or school paper.
8. How many options may we take?
9. As many as you can handle.
10. That's great!

Exercise E:

1. Our trip to the mountains, because the roads were covered in ice, had to be cancelled.
2. (,)When the weather warmed up, we set off again for the ski slopes.
3. (,)Even though the weather was warmer, the ski slopes were still very icy until they were groomed.
4. Robert did not go skiing with us because he had decided to spend his vacation on a warm, sunny beach getting a tan.
5. (,)After I sprained my ankle on an icy slope, my parents sent me to join Robert in the sun.
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7. It was not possible for me to stand on a board, but I could ride one in a kneeling position.
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Review Exercise B:

1. My father, mother, brother, sister and I all enjoy spending time at the beach during the summer.
2. When the summer ends and turns to fall , Father drives us to the mountains to see the fall leaves, photograph any wild life we may see, picnic beside the lake and collect colored leaves for my collection.
3. We have a nature assignment at school each year to help us understand the need to take care of the environment: our rivers, lakes and forests.
4. To save using power during the summer, we let in as much sunlight as possible, use energy saving light bulbs and cook on the barbecue.
5. Father, to save over using the furnace in the winter, keeps the temperature set low, makes us wear sweaters, keep artificial logs burning in the fireplace and sleep under plenty of blankets.
6. When we can afford it, we will have a solar panel installed on the roof to generate some of our electricity for lighting, heating and cooking.
7. Mother, my sister and I often prepare delicious meals of salad, fresh fruit and cold meats to save using the stove.
8. If you have any energy saving ideas, let us know so that we can try them too.

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1. We have three very good goalies on our team, however, I think Jim is the best.
2. Then, in fact, we are in agreement that Jim should start as goalie in our first playoff game.
3. Doug, who played excellent hockey in the last three games, will have to sit this one out because of his injured knee.
4. The player who is in the best shape and ready to play will start tomorrow.
5. Jim is, in my opinion the, fittest and best player we have.
6. The Red Devils, our main opposition, are all fit and ready, but we will, it seems to me, be able to beat them in three straight games and move on to the finals.
7. Our experienced coach, Matt Shaw, thinks we can win the series , but, unlike you, he thinks it may take us the full five games.
8. Well, that is his opinion, but, come on, we have been playing fantastic games for a young team.
9. It is not a good idea, most would agree, to under estimate your opposition.
10. Mark, who has been our top scorer for our last two games, is confident that, other things being equal, he will score well in the playoffs.

Exercise G:

1. The movie started early on Friday; we ran all the way to the theatre.
2. The car had a flat tire soon after we left home; Dad changed the wheel in no time.
3. When you have finished your homework, come and help with the dishes; the dishwasher is not working.
4. From the top of the hill, you could see the whole ski run; dozens of skiers were enjoying the new snow.
5. We will be moving overseas for three years at the end of the term; Dad has been transferred by his company.
6. My sister is staying here with an aunt; she finishes her university degree this year.
7. I hope you are going to England; remember I told you that we had a great time there.
8. No, we are going to be living in Moscow; it will be a real culture shock for all of us.
9. At least you'll be able to drive on the right hand side of the road; in England they drive on the left hand side.
10. That's great; I hope to learn to drive next year and come back with an international license.

Exercise H:

1. It must rain before the end of the month ,or our wheat crop will die off before it is ready to harvest.
2. There has been a little rain, and it is not enough to save the wheat crop.
3. The crop has picked up a little, and we have been able to harvest at least half the crop.
4. Our team needs a really strong goalie, or we will lose again this year.
5. We have tried out four goalie prospects, and one of the tryouts looks very promising.
6. If the team works well with our first choice for a new goalie, we will try him out in a game or two, but if the team does not click with him, we will have to do some more searching.
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10. There was talk of some players leaving to play for other teams, but we are all going to be back neat year except for Gary who was seriously hurt in the final when he scored our winning goal.

Exercise I:

1. We need to buy some supplies before you start school: a backpack, colored pencils, exercise books, and a lunch bag .
2. I can't decide which breed of dog I prefer: the German shepherd, a golden retriever or a Labrador.
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