

On the Job **WRITING**



BASIC EDITION

Lesson 20

In this lesson, you will learn to:

- Punctuate sentences
- Use commas correctly

PUNCTUATE AND CAPITALIZE

Claire, a self-employed environmental blogger, has finished her blog about Rankin Engineering. Today, she wrote about a clean water project the firm is managing in Kenya. For added interest, she spoke with two Rankin engineers who recently returned from Kenya, and she included their stories in her blog.

The engineers told Claire that water scarcity in Kenya has been an issue for decades. Safe drinking water is hard to find, and women walk miles each direction to locate water to bring home in containers hanging from their backs. Access to water for personal hygiene and sanitation is a big problem, and only 14% of Kenyans have soap and water to wash their hands at home.

The lack of water allows only a small part of Kenya's land to be used for agriculture, and the land is naturally dry. This leads to famine and starvation.



Rankin Engineering, to date, has donated \$5 million dollars in water wells, equipment and human resources to a Kenya project that serves one community, and it is committed to continuing the service. However, Rankin cannot bear alone the entire cost of bringing water to the community, and Claire's blog makes a plea for contributions from other engineering companies.

The blog is finished, and now Claire is ready to proofread for punctuation.

While she believes, and has been told, that she is an excellent writer, she feels far less secure about her ability to punctuate correctly. Her spelling and grammar checker catches most of the punctuation errors, but she's insecure about depending on the checker. In the short term, she has been asking her sister, who is excellent with punctuation to proofread every blog before she makes it live. She knows she needs to make improving her punctuation a big priority.

DEFINE IT! Coordinating Conjunction

Coordinating conjunctions connect words, phrases and clauses of equal rank.

PUNCTUATION IS LESS FORMAL TODAY

Good news! You don't need to remember as many punctuation rules as the previous generation of writers. The trend is toward a more open, informal style with fewer marks of punctuation. However, punctuation in business writing is here to stay, so your ability to punctuate correctly is essential.

Think of marks of punctuation as signposts that writers leave to make their messages easier to understand. The signposts let readers know when the writing is pausing, ending or putting several thoughts together.

Ending Punctuation

The type of sentence you write determines which ending punctuation you use. Your choices are periods, question marks and exclamation points.

Period

The period is the most common form of punctuation. It is a stopping point—the end of a statement.

We have painted your company logo on the side of your truck. You may pick up the truck at your convenience. We also can deliver the truck.

Question mark

Use a question mark when a sentence asks a question.

We have painted your company logo on the side of your truck. Would you like to pick up the truck? Do you prefer us to deliver the truck?

Exclamation point

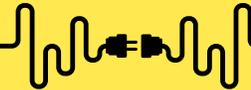
Use an exclamation point when you want to express excitement. You, as the writer, get to decide whether a sentence is a simple statement or exciting news and whether to use a period or exclamation point.

We have painted your company logo on the side of your truck! You may pick up the truck at your convenience! Do you prefer us to deliver the truck?

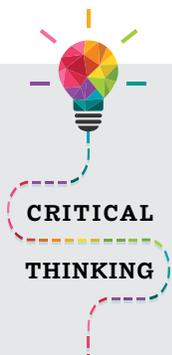
Do you notice that the sentence above contains all three forms of ending punctuation?



TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION



Spelling and grammar check programs will also check your punctuation. While the programs will not tell you when to use a period or exclamation point, they will check for misused periods, question marks, commas, semi-colons and other forms of punctuation.



On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best, how well do you believe you use punctuation?

Internal Punctuation

Within sentences you will use a variety of punctuation. This includes commas, semi-colons, dashes and others.

Comma

Used widely in business writing, commas serve many purposes. Without commas, understanding what a writer means would be much harder.

Use a comma to show a natural pause. If you are doubtful that a comma is needed, read the sentence aloud. If you pause at some place, insert a comma to mark the pause.

Her PowerPoint presentation was impressive, which showed she worked hard to prepare it.

The sky became dark, suggesting that we should break up our outside meeting.

A comma sets off expressions that aren't necessary to the meaning of the sentence.

Jennifer Thompson, who plans to ask for a transfer to another position in the company, was present at the meeting.

Do you know that Bett Juarez, president of New Venture Homes, will be at the meeting?

A comma separates two parts of a sentence that could be independent, standalone sentences. These are connected by a coordinating conjunction after the comma. The subordinating conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *nor*, *yet* and *so*.

I didn't have time to finish the drawings, so I will start again early tomorrow.

The trees need mulching, and the weeds need pulling.

Introductory clauses that set the stage for the rest of a sentence use a comma.

While you were at lunch, you received a call from a client.

Upon his arrival, the owner of the home described the plumbing problem.

Items in a series are separated by a comma. A comma before *and* is not needed.

Luke, Fran and Mitch will drive a van, but Sam, Jose and Li will come by car.

LESSON 20 ACTIVITY

Punctuate the paragraph below with periods, exclamation points, question marks and commas.

If you find copiers annoying you are not alone My unofficial survey of our staff showed that copier problems are frustrating and one person told me that fixing the copier takes an hour of her time each week Elana, Fred and Jane have just given up on the new copier we purchased and they are using the old copier again. Copier problems make people less productive, yet buying a new copier has received only minor attention at our company.

