**PUNCTUATION DEVICES**

**Definition Of Punctuation**

Punctuation is a set of marks that regulates and clarifies the meanings of different texts. The term “punctuation” has originated from the Medieval Latin word “pūnctuātiōn,” which means markings or signs. The purpose of punctuation is to clarify the meanings of texts by linking or separating words, phrases, or clauses.

# The Main Punctuation Marks

## 1. The Full Stop [.]

This is the strongest punctuation mark, making the most definite pause (in reading aloud or silently) when used at the end of a sentence.

## 2. The Question Mark [?]

This is used to end a direct question where an answer is normally expected.

## 3. The Exclamation Mark [!]

This is used after exclamations showing a high degree of surprise: "Fancy meeting you here!" or strong emotion: "You filthy cheat!" or special emphasis: "You are so beautiful!".

## 4. The Comma [,]

A comma has many uses, including: a. To separate items in a list: b. To separate two or more adjectives which individually modify a noun: c. In pairs, commas are used to separate descriptive phrases or clauses, or less important material, from the main part of the sentence: d. To separate parts of compound or complex sentences, to aid comprehension by separating different ideas: To separate sentence modifiers such as moreover, indeed, however.

## 5. The Semicolon [;]

## The semicolon is an important but often under-used punctuation mark. It is particularly useful in long, complicated sentences, giving a longer pause than a comma, but not as long as a full stop.

## 6. The Colon [:]

A colon is generally a punctuation mark of introduction, signaling 'look ahead', rather than of separating or stopping things. It is used: a. To introduce a list: o introduce an explanation, expansion or summary of the first part of a sentence:

## 7. The Brackets [( )]

Brackets are always used in pairs, to separate supplementary, subsidiary or explanatory material from the main flow of a sentence.

## 8. The Dash [- or — ]

A single dash is used: a. To mark a pause for effect: She wore her most stunning dress — a billowing ocean of multi- colored taffeta To introduce an afterthought, a summary, an elaboration or a change in direction of thought: "I was in the artillery during the war — but I mustn't bore you with ancient history."

## 9. The Hyphen [-]

## he hyphen has no surrounding spaces and is a joining mark within words and compound expressions: ex-wife, short-sighted, blue-eyed; do-it-yourself, non-stick.

## 10. The Apostrophe [ ' ]

This has several uses:

a. To indicate that a letter or letters have been omitted: don't (do not); I'll (I will or I shall); it's (it is or it has — note that the possessive pronoun 'its' does not have an apostrophe). Do not use an apostrophe in possessive pronouns: its, hers, his, ours, yours, theirs, but there is one in one's.

b. To form plurals of expressions with no natural plural: The 1980's were a better decade for us. Many writers would omit that apostrophe. c. To form the possessive case of a noun:

## 11. The Quotation Marks [ " " ] or [' ']

Quotation marks are also called inverted commas, speech marks or quotes. Use common sense to decide where other punctuation comes in relation to them. British and American usages differ at the end of the quoted text: The Englishman said, "Carry on, chaps ".The American said, "Carry on, you guys."