

Editorial Graphics and Publishing Services

Punctuation in Business English (Part 2)

Exclamation mark

How to use it: Expression of surprise or other strong emotion (very rare in business writing).

Example: We won the game!

Period

How to use it: At the end of a sentence

Example: Always put a period at the end of a sentence.

Question mark

How to use it: At the end of a sentence that asks a question

Example: How long does it take to get to school each morning?

Quotation marks

How to use it: To indicate a specific phrase

Example: Students get “real-world” experiences in the internship.

To indicate a specific statement said by someone

Example: The bus driver said, “Please step inside and sit in your seats.”

To highlight or emphasize a point

Example: There is only one goal left to pursue: get funding for the program.

Semicolon

How to use it: To bring two related thoughts together

Example: Students need to prepare for college; most of them will need counseling first.

When creating a list that includes commas

Examples: Tom Smith, principal; Heather John, counselor; and Jane’s parents attended the meeting.

Brackets []

How to use it: To clarify information in a quotation

Example: “Montgomery County [Maryland] has the 16th largest school district in the nation,” he explained.

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Capitalization

How to use it: Proper nouns: Names of people, places; concepts/ideas, and titles

Examples: Reverend Thomas Wright; Christianity and Judaism

Abbreviations

Example: NAACP, U.S., Dr. Williams

Beginning of sentence

Example: He is very ambitious.