

# Functional Skills English

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Level 2



Learning Resource 1  
Punctuation

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**Information****Commas**

The main uses of commas are:

- 1) **to mark a pause in a sentence;**

e.g. He can't come, I'm afraid.

- 2) **to divide items in a list;**

e.g. Bring your mother, father, brother and sister.

- 3) **to separate part of a sentence which gives useful information but which is not vital for understanding or for grammar;**

e.g. The car, so they tell me, is running away.

- 1) **Marking a pause in a sentence to make the sentence easier to read and understand.**

When you read out a passage of English, you pause at the full stop which ends each sentence. You also make shorter pauses within each sentence to make the meaning clearer. These shorter pauses are marked by commas.

**Examples:**

Remember, he will be wearing a pink carnation.

If the paperboy comes, buy a computer magazine.

## 2) In lists

When you write a list of short items, you should put a comma after each one.

### Example:

He carried some oranges, apples, a ball of string and some marbles.

Notice that there usually is no comma before the final **and**. However, if the final part of the sentence is quite long or complicated, it is sometimes acceptable to put a comma in front of the '**and**'.

### Example:

They had spent all morning preparing for departure by packing the car, checking the windows, watering the plants, and making sure that they had cancelled the milk, papers and magazines.

## 3) In pairs

Sometimes commas act as markers or brackets, separating extra information in the middle of a sentence.

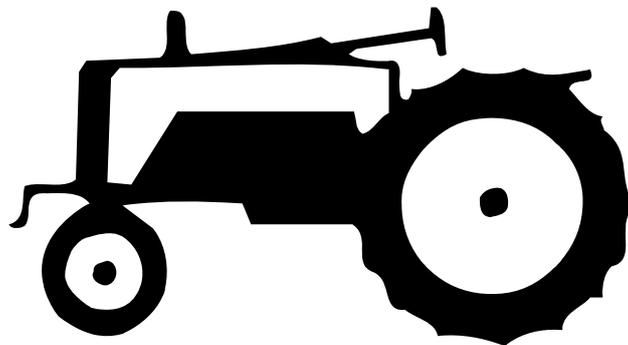
### Example:

I saw a tractor, a relic of the old farm, left to go rusty.

This is made up of two statements:

- 1) "I saw a tractor left to go rusty";  
and
- 2) (the tractor was) "a relic of the old farm".

The second statement can be placed in the middle of the first, without confusion, by putting a comma before and after it.



**Information****Semi-Colons**

A full stop brings a sentence to a halt, a comma produces a pause; a semi-colon can be thought of as half way between, producing a longer pause than a comma. It is used in two ways:

- 1) to join statements that are related to one another and are themselves complete sentences;
- 2) to separate a list following a colon.

**Examples:**

- The times of arrival and departure will vary with the time of year; details may be found in Appendix A attached.
- Some people like to work in an open plan office; some people like separate offices.
- Sui Ming listed all the things that he needed to take into the examination; a calculator to help him work out percentages; a pencil to make any necessary notes; and a pen to fill in the answer sheet.

**Exercise 1**

**Rewrite the following sentences, inserting semi-colons where you think it appropriate.**

- 1) Michelle is loyal, discreet and conscientious I can thoroughly recommend her for the job.  
.....  
.....  
.....
- 2) An ideal employee needs to be enthusiastic, tactful, hardworking and loyal finding all these qualities in one person can be difficult.  
.....  
.....  
.....
- 3) Will all staff note the following: only trained staff are allowed to use the computers training courses will be provided for staff wishing to acquire necessary computer skills and employees wishing to undergo training should inform their manager.  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Exercise 2**

Now see if you can write 3 examples for yourself of sentences using semi-colons.

1) .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3) .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Handy hints**

If you are not sure whether to use a semi-colon or not, use a comma instead. It is better not to use one at all than to use one incorrectly.

**Information****Colons**

In the past, colons and semi-colons were used in a similar way. Nowadays the colon is only used to introduce a list.

**Example:**

Sui Ming listed all the things that he needed to take into the examination: a calculator to help him work out percentages; a pencil to make any necessary notes; and a pen to fill in the answer sheet.

**Exercise 3**

**Photocopy 3 pages from a chapter of a text book of your choice. Using different colours highlight any commas, semi-colons and colons in the piece.**

**Discuss with another learner or your tutor how they have been used.**

**Information****Other Punctuation**

There are other, less used, pieces of punctuation which are used for specific purposes in some text types.

**For example:**

hyphens, dashes, brackets, bullet points and ellipsis.

**Consult the glossary at the back of this workbook for definitions of all the most commonly used punctuation marks.**

**Exercise 4**

**Take a page from a text book or a novel and a page from an instructional manual or recipe book.**

**Highlight all the punctuation used and list in the appropriate column below:**

Text Book/Novel	Instructional Text

**Do you notice any differences in punctuation usage?**

**Information****Possessive Apostrophes**

The apostrophe can be used to show possession or relationship.

The apostrophe together with an 's', replaces the word 'of'.

**Examples:**

- The friend of Jane **becomes** Jane's friend.

We have used an apostrophe to show that the friend belongs to Jane.

- The travel card of the learner **becomes** the learner's travel card.

i.e. The travel card belongs to the learner.

- The car of James **becomes** James's car.

i.e. The car belongs to James.

- The armoured-car of the soldiers **becomes** the soldiers' armoured car.

i.e. The car belongs to the soldiers.

- The clothes of the men becomes the men's clothes.

i.e. The clothes belong to the men.

**Golden Rules**

- 1) The apostrophe goes on the possessor **NOT** on the thing possessed.
- 2) The apostrophe goes immediately after **the singular or plural version** of the noun.

**Exception**

- The possessive form of its does not carry an apostrophe e.g. the dog ate its bone.

**N.B. The omissive apostrophe is dealt with in Level 1 Learning Resource 1 Page 16.**

**Exercise 5**

**One word in each of these sentences needs an apostrophe. Insert the apostrophe in red.**

- 1) He met his mothers cousin.
- 2) The books last page is torn.
- 3) Where is Sonyas pair of boots?
- 4) He says he likes his brothers picture best.
- 5) The benches legs are broken.
- 6) The captains table is always stable.

**Exercise 6**

**Say which word needs the apostrophe in each pair of sentences and explain why.**

- 1) The cats are howling. The cats dinner is ready.  
.....  
.....
- 2) There are five soldiers outside. These are the soldiers rifles.  
.....  
.....
- 3) They are eating their nephews cakes. He made them at school.  
.....  
.....
- 4) Who broke the carpenters vice? The vice belonged to several carpenters.  
.....  
.....
- 5) They like fast cars. That cars exhaust is trailing on the ground.  
.....  
.....

**Exercise 7**

**Rewrite these phrases by replacing “of” or “of the” by an apostrophe. The word order of the phrase will need to be altered.**

- 1) the climax of the film .....
- 2) the scent of flowers .....
- 3) the friends of my brother .....
- 4) the hooters of cars .....
- 5) the fishing rod of the sailor .....
- 6) the green eye of the little yellow god .....
- 7) the hideout of the spy .....
- 8) the barracks of the Coldstream Guards .....

**Exercise 8**

**In the following passage there are ten words which require an apostrophe. Insert the apostrophes in red.**

The childrens aunt and Annes father met to discuss their plans for the holiday. The adults could not agree because ones idea was to have a restful time while the others intention was to go out and climb mountain peaks. The meetings result was that the first weeks holiday would be spent by the sea and the last weeks holiday would be in North Wales. They estimated both cars capacity as to what they could carry.

“My friends luggage trailer would be very useful,” said Anne. “It would easily hold all uncles camping gear.”

## Exercise 9

**Insert the apostrophes needed in the following sentences.**

- 1) We enjoyed reading Michael Browns stories.
- 2) The woman needed her cars brakes testing.
- 3) Womens clothes cost less than mens.
- 4) The next camp was a days walk away.
- 5) My brother cooks all the meals in our house – unfortunately without reference to anyones tastes.
- 6) What do we commemorate on St Stephens Day?
- 7) Pauls sports car was the talk of the neighbourhood.
- 8) Mrs Davies business contacts extend all over Europe.
- 9) Union officials disrupted the courts verdict and asked for the tribunals decision to be reversed.
- 10) Babies early speech patterns are fascinating to study.
- 11) The reputation of the school was damaged by the childrens decision to leave the premises.

## Exercise 10

**Rewrite this passage with an apostrophe (correctly placed) to replace “of the” where possible. The passage will begin: “The boy’s coat”.**

The coat of the boy was on the cage of the hamsters. The hamsters were hiding in the shade of the tree; perhaps because they disliked the smoke-laden smell of the garment. A couple of naturalists looked out from the doorway of the neighbours.

**Information****Speech Marks**

Inverted commas, sometimes called speech marks, are used to show the actual words someone has spoken. They are used to indicate direct speech and quotations. They should include the punctuation which makes sense of what is being spoken.

**Examples**

“Don’t do that!” he shouted.

“Are you coming to college tomorrow?” asked Stefan.

However, when a full stop is the appropriate punctuation at the end of the speech, it is replaced by a comma.

**Example**

“It’s time for lunch,” said Puja.

**Exercise 11**

**With a coloured pen, put the speech marks in the correct place in the following sentences.**

- 1) What are you going to do with your assessment when you have finished it? asked the tutor.
- 2) The man asked, Do you mind if I smoke?
- 3) Please don’t drop that litter in the street! exclaimed the community officer.
- 4) The data projector is on the blink, said Margaret.
- 5) Raj was overheard to say, I really don’t understand where to put these speech marks.

**Information**

**Go back and read the questions again.**

As you can see from these examples, wherever the speech comes in the sentence it needs to begin with a capital letter.

**A further example**

The newspaper report quoted, “The council are not responsible for the upkeep of an unadopted road and therefore refuse to carry out repairs on Hallam Street.” However, Mr Smith, a resident of Hallam Street said, “The newspaper has got its fact wrong.” The saga continues.

### Exception

When the speech is interrupted in the middle by an interjection of who is speaking, the speech does not need to continue with a capital letter.

### Example

“I really don’t believe,” added Georgie, “**w**hat you have just told me.”

### Exercise 12

In the following sentences, put in the missing punctuation including the inverted commas or speech marks.

- 1) try not to excite the dog or he may well bite you said Josef
- 2) the incident is closed exclaimed Helen please do not mention it again
- 3) what would you like for Christmas Emma asked her mother
- 4) please don’t do that pleaded Todd it upsets me
- 5) why do apprentice plumbers all have to do maths demanded Prab

### Information

### Direct and Indirect Speech

You must take care when using inverted commas that you use them only around **direct speech** i.e. the actual words that have been spoken, not **indirect speech** i.e. when the words that have been spoken are simply reported ‘second-hand’.

### Example

Tanya said that **she was going home**.

The actual words that Tanya would have said are, “**I am going home**.” And therefore **she was going home** is only **reported speech** and hence does not require speech marks.

**Exercise 13**

**Decide which of these sentences contain direct speech, and therefore requires speech marks, and which contain reported speech, and therefore do not.**

**Write each sentence out, with the appropriate punctuation, in the given space.**

1) Are you blind that's the second time you've bumped into me.

.....  
.....

2) Keilly asked if she could have a second helping of chips.

.....  
.....

3) Too many cooks spoil the broth is a well known phrase.

.....  
.....

4) If you get to the pub first, said Henry, you can get the first round in!

.....  
.....

5) The College principal was heard to say that she thought the department had improved really well.

.....  
.....

**Exercise 14**

**Punctuation Investigation**

Make a collection of advertising flyers and leaflets. Annotate and classify the different sorts of punctuation marks and comment on how they contribute to the purpose of the text. i.e. do they help persuade the reader to buy the goods or use the services they are advertising. You may like to use the following table to record your findings.

Kind of Text	Example of Punctuated Text	Punctuation Used	Effectiveness
bksb information pack.	“ ... Your learning materials are excellent examples of good practice.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inverted commas</li> <li>• Ellipsis</li> </ul>	Inverted commas show the words are an actual quote from a customer. The ellipsis shows there could well have been other positive comments by this customer.

### Punctuation Glossary

<b>Apostrophe</b>	(')	<p>An <b>omissive apostrophe</b> is used to show the contraction of 2 words into one. An apostrophe is placed where the letters have been dropped. (e.g. <b>do not</b> becomes <b>don't</b>).</p> <p>A possessive apostrophe is used to show possession or relationship (e.g. <b>John's</b> car, the <b>soldiers'</b> tank).</p>
<b>Brackets</b>	()	<p>1) To enclose extra information, comment, or explanations eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He is (as he always was) a rebel.</li> <li>• Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia)</li> <li>• They talked about Machtpolitik (power politics).</li> </ul> <p>2) To give references and citations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eg Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1882)</li> <li>• A discussion of integrated circuitry (see page 167)</li> </ul> <p>3) To enclose optional words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eg There are many (apparent) difficulties.</li> <li>• The man walked and his sister (Sarah) greeted him.</li> </ul>
<b>Colon</b>	(:)	<p>A <b>colon</b> is used to introduce a list, a quotation or a second clause which expands or illustrates the first. (e.g. She was very hot; the temperature was well over 40°C).</p>
<b>Comma</b>	(,)	<p>A <b>comma</b> is used to mark a pause in a sentence, or used to separate items in a list. (e.g. He bought nails, hooks, screws and a hammer).</p>
<b>Dash</b>	(-)	<p>A <b>dash</b> may be used to replace brackets; to indicate an afterthought; or to replace other punctuation in informal writing - e.g. a letter to a friend, notes etc.</p>

<b>Ellipsis</b>	(...)	This signifies a place where something has been omitted, or there is a pause or interruption. It is used for economy or style. (e.g. He heard a strange noise in the corridor ... what could it be?).
<b>Exclamation mark</b>	(!)	A <b>punctuation mark</b> is used at the end of a sentence to show great emotion such as surprise, anger or fear. (e.g. Don't do that!).
<b>Full stop</b>	(.)	A <b>full stop</b> is the usual end of sentence punctuation.
<b>Hyphen</b>	(-)	A <b>hyphen</b> links two words or parts of words to make a single word or expression (e.g. ear-ring); to join a prefix to a proper noun (e.g. pro-Labour); or to clarify meaning (e.g. sixty-odd people / sixty odd people).
<b>Inverted commas</b>	(" ")	<b>Inverted commas</b> or <b>speech marks</b> are used to indicate the actual words spoken by someone either in direct speech or in a quotation. (e.g. Vanessa asked, "Whatever is wrong?").
<b>Question mark</b>	(?)	A <b>question mark</b> is an end of sentence punctuation mark which indicates that the sentence is a question. (e.g. What's for dinner tonight?).
<b>Semi-colon</b>	(;)	A <b>semi-colon</b> is used to separate phrases or clauses in a sentence. It is stronger than a comma, but not as strong as a full stop. They are usually used to separate two clauses of equal weight. (e.g. He liked to holiday in Greece; his wife preferred Spain.).

**N.B.** Although this glossary and the information on the use of punctuation in this workbook reflects academic thinking at the present time, it must be remembered that rules and attitudes towards punctuation change.