

# 9 End Marks

The punctuation you use at the end of a sentence is as important as the words that make up the sentence because it acts as a signal to the reader.

- End marks tell when the sentence is finished, when a thought is complete.
- End marks give the reader certain directions as to how the thought in the sentence should be read.
- One of three marks end a sentence: the period, the question mark, or the exclamation point.

## POINTERS ABOUT PERIODS

Use the period at the end of statements of fact, indirect questions, and mild commands.

Statement of fact: Don is the man in the brown tweed jacket and tan slacks.

Indirect question: She asked whether Don was the man in the brown tweed jacket and tan slacks.

Mild command: Don, wear a brown tweed jacket and tan pants.

## POINTERS ABOUT QUESTION MARKS

• Whenever you seek information—ask a question—the question mark should appear. One of the “question words” at the beginning of a sentence often, but not always, gives a clue to the need for a question mark.

WHO	Who is coming? ( <i>But not:</i> Tell him who you are.)
WHAT	What did you say? ( <i>But not:</i> I know what it is.)
WHY	Why is he ill? ( <i>But not:</i> I told her why I was ill.)
WHEN	When did they leave? ( <i>But not:</i> When they left, I saw them.)
WHERE	Where did they go? ( <i>But not:</i> Where they went, nobody knows.)
HOW	How did you look? ( <i>But not:</i> I see how you feel.)

- In sentences of courtesy, although a question is suggested, a question mark is often not required: Will you please take a seat. Would you wait here just a moment, please.
- The reversed order of subject and verb in the sentence is another clue for question marks.

Statement 1 (Regular Order): It (*subject*) is (*verb*) time to go. (*period*) Question 1: Is (*verb*) it (*subject*) time to go? (*question mark*)

Statement 2 (Regular Order): You (*subject*) have (*verb*) lost your way. (*period*) Question 2: Have (*verb*) you (*subject*) lost your way? (*question mark*)

- If a question is asked but the writer wants to bring out that the sentence expresses strong feeling, an exclamation point may be used: Did you do that dumb thing again! Why didn't you tell it to me!

## POINTERS ABOUT EXCLAMATION POINTS

- Any indication of emotion—hatred, joy, love, anger, fear, surprise, or longing—calls for the exclamation point: (1) How I hate him! (hatred) (2) I'm so glad to see you! (joy) (3) If only he were here! (longing) (4) I'm in love! (joy, love, ecstasy)

## EXERCISES

A. Read this paragraph titled “Late Again.” Then answer the questions that follow it.

- (1) It is true that I did sneak up the stairs very late to my job as office boy at Puritan Supply Company. (2) Yet I didn't expect Mr. Terry, my employer, to be standing at the door waiting for me. (3) “I told you that you'd better be on time! (4) Where have you been?” (5) As I watched his face growing red, I stammered another promise not to be late again and dashed off to the stock room. (6) Never talk back to an employer. (7) And never stay up for “The Late Late Show” either!
1. Why do sentences 1 and 2 end in periods?

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2. Why do sentences 3 and 7 end with exclamation points?

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3. Why does sentence 4 end with a question mark?

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4. Why does sentence 5 end with a period?

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5. Why does sentence 6 end with a period?

B. Add the correct punctuation at the end of each sentence.

1. Sleeping takes up too much of our time
2. Which team will win the series
3. When the bell rings, we must go to our next class
4. Jeanne, I'm in love with a wonderful guy
5. You can't imagine how terrified we felt

C. Follow directions, making sure to use correct end marks at the end of your sentences, which you are to write on separate paper.

1. Write a sentence about crime in your city. Try to express your feelings strongly.
2. Write a sentence in which you ask a friend whether he will be able to go skiing with you during Christmas vacation.
3. Write a sentence that tells someone to move out of the path of an ambulance speeding down the street.
4. Write a sentence about a movie you saw recently.