

ENGLISH · GRADES 2–6

Punctuation Reference

Every mark a primary writer needs

End-of-sentence marks

Mark	Name	What it does	Example
.	Full stop / period	Ends a sentence	We went home.
?	Question mark	Ends a question	Are you ready?
!	Exclamation mark	Shows strong feeling or shouting	Watch out!

Within-sentence marks

Mark	Name	What it does	Example
,	Comma	Separates items in a list, or pauses	I bought apples, pears and grapes.
;	Semi-colon	Joins two related sentences	She loved cats; he preferred dogs.
:	Colon	Introduces a list or explanation	I needed three things: hat, gloves, scarf.
...	Ellipsis	Shows missing words or a pause	It was getting dark...
—	Dash	Adds an extra thought (more than a comma)	The sun came out — finally!

Word-level marks



Mark	Name	What it does	Example
'	Apostrophe	Shows ownership OR a missing letter	Sarah's bag / don't
""	Speech marks	Show what someone says	"Hello," she said.
()	Brackets	Add extra information (like this)	I went home (after school)
-	Hyphen	Joins words to make one idea	well-known author

Two tricky ones explained

<p>Apostrophe — possession</p> <p>Adds 's to show something belongs to someone. 'Tom's bag' = the bag that belongs to Tom. 'The dog's bone' = the bone of the dog. (For PLURALS ending in s, just add an apostrophe: 'the dogs' bones'.)</p>	<p>Apostrophe — contraction</p> <p>Replaces a missing letter. 'Don't' = 'do not' (apostrophe replaces the 'o'). 'I'm' = 'I am'. 'It's' = 'it is' (NOT possession — confusing!).</p>
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Common mistakes to watch for

- 'Its' (belonging) vs 'It's' (it is). The dog wagged ITS tail. IT'S a sunny day.
- 'Your' (belonging) vs 'You're' (you are). YOUR turn. YOU'RE next.
- Comma splice: don't join two full sentences with just a comma. Use a full stop OR a semicolon.
- Apostrophes don't make plurals. NOT 'apple's' for many apples — just 'apples'.
- At end of speech: comma BEFORE the closing speech mark. "Hello," she said. NOT "Hello", she said.



Try yourself

Add the right punctuation to this paragraph: it was a windy day i pulled my coat tighter where are you going asked dad to the park i replied watch out for the rain he warned

