Q. When do you use *whom* instead of *who*?

A. Use *who* when a nominative pronoun is appropriate, and *whom* when an objective pronoun is appropriate.

Who is a *nominative pronoun* (meaning it acts as a subject) and is used:

1. As the subject of a verb, as in "It was Paul who rescued the dog."
2. As the complement of a linking verb, as in "They know who you are."

Whom is an *objective pronoun* (meaning it serves as an object) and is used:

1. As the object of a verb, as in "Whom did you see?"
2. As the object of a preposition, as in "That is the group to whom the credit belongs."

Who and *whom* seem to cause more difficulty than other pronouns. Thus, when in doubt, substitute *him* and see if that sounds right. If *him* is OK, then *whom* is OK. For example: "You talked to *whom*? You talked to *him*." It would be incorrect to say "You talked to he," and few native English speakers would make that mistake.

Q. How do I use the words *might* and *may*?

A. *May* expresses likelihood while *might* expresses a stronger sense of doubt or a contrary-to-fact hypothetical

The difference in degree between "You may be right" and "You might be right" is slight but not insignificant: If I say you may be right about something, there is a higher degree of probability that you are right about it than if I say you might be right about something. "You think Einstein is the most brilliant physicist who ever lived? You may be right." versus "You think it's going to rain this afternoon even though the sun is shining this morning? Well, you might be right." *May* expresses likelihood while *might* expresses a stronger sense of doubt or a contrary-to-fact hypothetical: "We might have been able to go if Kyle hadn't been so slow."

Q. What is the difference in usage for *like* vs. *as*?

A. The rule is: "*As comes before a clause.*"

If the word is followed by a clause, a group of words with both a subject and a verb, use *as*: He liked the restaurant, *as* any gourmet would. If no verb follows, choose *like*: He walks *like* a platypus.

However, in casual usage, *like* is gaining steadily as in "He tells it like it is," or "She eats ice cream like it's going out of style." The informal use of *like* to introduce a clause is fine in conversation or casual writing, but to be grammatically correct, remember the "*as* comes before a clause" rule.

Q. What is the rule for determining whether or not to write out a number as a word?

A. In general, write out the first nine cardinal (1-9) numbers; use figures for 10 and above.

In general, write out the first nine **cardinal (1-9) numbers** (except for address numbers 2-9, dates, decimals, game scores, highways, latitude/longitude, mathematical expressions, measurement/weight, money/financial data, percentages, proportion, scientific expressions, statistics, technical expressions, temperature, time, unit modifiers, votes, and numbers not written out in a proper noun) and any number that begins a sentence; use figures for 10 and above. The first nine **ordinal (1st-9th) numbers** are usually written out, especially when describing order in time or location.

Q. Do you hyphenate numbers?

A. Sometimes.

Whole numbers twenty-one through ninety-nine are hyphenated, whether used alone or as part of a larger number. A whole number followed by *hundred*, *thousand*, etc., would be written as, for example, "one hundred," and not hyphenated. In a phrase like "one hundred and ten years," no hyphenation should be added.

Q. What do you call words that are pronounced the same but have different meanings and/or spellings?

A. Homophones.

*Homophone*s are "one of two or more words, such as *night* and *knight*, which are pronounced the same but differ in meaning, origin, and sometimes spelling." Examples are ad/add, air/ere/heir/err (though the correct pronunciation of the last word is held to be \ur\, as in f**ur**th**er**), ball/bawl, and night/knight.

Homonyms are words that have the same sound and often the same spelling but differ in meaning, such as the noun *bear* and the verb *bear*.

Homographs are words that have the same spelling but differ in origin, meaning, and sometimes pronunciation.

Q. What is the difference between *toward* and *towards*?

A. The difference is merely dialectal.

Toward and *towards* act as a preposition and adjective and have several meanings. The difference is dialectal, though many have tried to draw a semantic distinction (that is, a distinction in meaning). *Toward* is more common in American English; *towards* is the predominant form in British English.

Q. What is the difference between dinner and supper?

A: Supper is a light evening meal; served in early evening if dinner is at midday or served late in the evening at bedtime. Dinner is the main meal of the day served in the evening or at midday. However, in certain regions of the US (like the New England), the words are used interchangeably for the main evening meal.

Q. What is the difference between *i.e.* and *e.g.*?

A. *I.e.* means "that is" (to say). *E.g.* means "for example."

I.e. is an abbreviation for Latin *id est*, "that is." *E.g.* is for *exempli gratia,* "for the sake of example." So you can say, "I like citrus fruits, e.g., oranges and lemons"; or, "I like citrus fruits, i.e. the juicy, edible fruits with leathery, aromatic rinds of any of numerous tropical, usually thorny shrubs or trees of the genus *Citrus*." In the first sentence you are simply giving an instance of a citrus fruit; in the second you giving an explanation. *E.g.* simply indicates an example; *i.e.* specifies, explains. Compare: *She loves to read non-fiction, e.g., reference books and how-to books* vs. *He had one obvious flaw, i.e. his laziness*.

Q. Does a comma go after *i.e.* or *e.g.*?

A. By nature, they are preceded by a mark of punctuation, usually a comma. Generally both are followed by a comma in American English, though not in British English. E.g. may also be followed by a colon,

depending on the construction. In British English, it is often written as eg with the periods omitted.

Q. When do you use *that* and *which*?

A. Generally, use *that* for persons or things, *which* only for things.

In current usage, *that* refers to persons or things and *which* is used chiefly for things.

Q. Do adverbs always end in *-ly*?

A. No.

Though many adverbs are formed by the addition of *-ly* to an adjective (sad/sadly), there are many other formations:

1. those beginning with 'a' (*apart*)
2. compound adverbs (*downstairs*, *underfoot*)
3. adverbial phrases or adverbials (*for a time*)
4. conjunctive adverbs or conjuncts (the word *so* in "She has a lot of energy, so she puts everyone to shame."
5. derivational adverbs formed with *-fashion*, *-style*, *-ward*, *-way*, *-wise*
6. adverbs of time ending in *-s* — as *always*, *backwards* — and also *ever*, *now*, *often*, *once*, *soon* (etc.)

Q. What is a run-on sentence?

A. A run-on sentence is an ungrammatical construction in which two or more independent clauses are improperly joined without a conjunction or appropriate punctuation. When a sentence contains several subjects and verb combinations causing the reader to read on and on, that sentence is called a run-on sentence. The effect is that the reader loses the main idea of the sentence. Example: "He doesn't need me he just calls to make himself feel better." Here you could use a semicolon: "He doesn't need me; he just calls to make himself feel better." Another example: "I went to the store I was out of bananas." Here you could either use a semicolon or a conjunction, such as *because*: "I went to the store because I was out of bananas."

Q. What is syntax?

A. Syntax is the way words are put together in a language to form phrases, clauses, or sentences.

The syntax of a language can be divided into two parts:

1. syntactic classes such as noun, verb, and adjective
2. syntactic functions, such as subject and object.

Syntax is the set of natural rules or patterns that govern how units conveying messages (i.e., words and word

parts such as prefixes) are combined in a language to form meaningful sentences.

Q. What are the rules for capitalization?

A. The rules of capitalization are quite extensive and depend somewhat on the context in which the words are used. The basic rules are to capitalize:

- The first word of a sentence
- Names of the days of the week, months of the year
- The pronoun *I*
- Names, including initials, of individuals
- Titles which precede names
- All names of holidays (excluding any prepositions)
- The first word and all nouns in a salutation
- The first word in the complimentary closing of a letter
- Family relationship names when they precede a name or are used in place of person's name, especially in direct address
- All words in the names of specific organizations and agencies excluding prepositions, conjunctions, and articles
- Names of languages
- Names of definite sections of a country or the world
- Names of nationalities
- Names of religions and deities
- Adjectives formed from names of geographical locations, languages, races, nationalities, and religions

- The first word and all the words in titles of books, articles, works of art, etc. excluding short prepositions, conjunctions, and articles

Q. When do you use *lie* and *lay*?

A. To *lay* is to place something; to *lie* is to recline.

To *lay* is to place something. It is always followed by an object, the thing being placed. To *lie* is to recline. For example: *He lays the book down to eat. She lies quietly on the chaise.*

Part of the source of the confusion is the past tense of *lie*, which is *lay*: *She lay on the chaise all day.* The past participle of *lie* is *lain*, as in *She has lain there since yesterday, as a matter of fact.* The past tense of *lay* is *laid*, as is the past participle.

Q. What is the difference between *affect* and *effect*?

A. Read on . . .

As a verb, to *affect* means "to act upon or have an influence on": "Sunless days affect my mood." It can also mean "to make a show of; to put on a pretence of; to feign; to assume"; as, "to *affect* ignorance." To *effect* means "to bring about or create"; as, "to effect a change." If you *affect* something, you do to it. If you *effect* something, you cause it to be. Advertising might *affect* the sales of widgets (by causing them to increase),

or it can *effect* sales (bring them about) if, for example, there were no sales at all to begin with.

As a noun, *effect* means "result, consequence, outcome." An *effect* is that which is produced when you *affect* something: "The poem affected me deeply; it really had an effect on me." *Affect* as a noun is a term from the field of psychotherapy meaning "the emotional complex associated with an idea or mental state." If you are not a psychiatrist or social scientist, you will likely have little use for it.

To make it simple, or at least less complicated, keep in mind that *usually* if you want a noun, the word you want is *effect,* but if you want a verb, the word you want is *affect.*

Q. What is the rule for determining whether to use "a" or "an"?

A. The rule is: Use "an" before a word beginning with a vowel *sound*, however the word is spelled.

Hence you say *an* MBA, *an* hour, but *a* BA, *a* horologist, a university professor, an ugly dog. You say either *an* historical event or *a* historical event, according to whether you pronounce the h.

Q. Does *bimonthly* mean twice a month or every two months?

Source: dictionary.com; tefl.net

A. Every two months (usually).

Bi- means "two," so *bimonthly* means "happening every two months" — but it also means "happening twice a month." Biweekly means happening every two weeks and also happening twice a week.

Q. Please offer a general discussion of how to use punctuation marks.

A. A discussion of each mark follows, in alphabetical order by name of mark. Also includes how to divide words; use of numerals/numbers; possessives; and common errors in punctuation (last item on the page).

The **apostrophe**, or **'**.

- Use of the apostrophe to indicate **possession**
    - The possessive form of singular nouns ends in 's, including nouns ending in s, x, z, ch, or sh. For example, *a dog's life*; *a lass's smile*.
    - The apostrophe follows the s for the possessive of plural nouns except for plurals which do not end in s. For example, you would write *zebras' stripes*, but *children's books*.
    - No apostrophe is used for personal pronouns like hers, <u>its</u>, theirs; indefinite pronouns require one: e.g. *one's friend*.
    - In compounds, the 's is added to the word nearest the object of possession.
    - Joint possession is shown by putting the apostrophe on the last word of a series, e.g. *Abelard and Héloise's child*.

- o The apostrophe follows the *s* of a word with two <u>sibilant</u> sounds; e.g. *Kansas'* and *Moses'*.
  - o The apostrophe is **not** used in *Pikes Peak*, the mountain in Colorado.
- Use of the apostrophe to indicate **contraction**
  - o The apostrophe is used when leaving out a letter or number in a contraction. For example, *I can't* (instead of *cannot*); *let's dance* (instead of *let us*); *it's a beautiful day in the neighbourhood* (instead of *it is*).
- Use of the apostrophe in **plurals**
  - o Plurals of letter abbreviations with periods and single letters use 's. For example, "There are four s's in *possess*."
  - o Plurals of letter combinations, numerals, and hyphenated nouns end in *s* with no apostrophe; for example, *1s and 0s*.
  - o The apostrophe is not used in names of organizations unless actually part of the legal name.

Braces, or **{ }** are used to show the relationship of elements in a group.

Brackets, or **[ ]**

- Used to insert words in quoted matter, for explanatory, correction, or commentary reasons.
- Used to insert missing letters and to enclose insertions that take the place of or slightly alter the original text, e.g. [they] may replace a long list of names previously mentioned. Brackets are also used in unquoted matter for the same reasons.
- Used as parentheses within parentheses.

- Used in mathematical expressions (to show matter to be treated as a unit), chemical formulas, and for phonetic symbols.

Colon, or **:**

- Used to introduce explanatory information, lists; for salutations, as "Dear so-and-so:" and in clock time (e.g. "It was at 5:00 in the afternoon"); periodical reference (e.g. 4:3); and between book title and book subtitle (e.g. *Dictionaries: The Art and Craft of Lexicography*).
- Used before a final clause that explains, amplifies something in that sentence, e.g. "The dissertation needs work: it lacks flow."
- A colon introduces a series or summarizing statement, e.g. "The following is on our list of places to go: grocery store, toy store, doughnut shop," or "She had one great love: him."
- Used in proportions, e.g. 2:1, and as a ratio sign, e.g. 1:2::3:6.
- May introduce a quotation, especially a long one.
- Used in dialogue text, e.g. "Juliet: O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?"
- Used in correspondence for headings and introductory terms, e.g. To: From: Re: and to separate writer/typist and carbon-copy abbreviation from the recipients.

Comma or **,**

Most commonly used to separate or set off items as:

- Separate items that might otherwise be misunderstood.

- Separate members of a series used with `and', `or', or `nor'.
- Separate main clauses or before the conjunction in a compound sentence.
- Separate two verb phrases in a sentence.
- Set off subordinate clauses/phrases within sentence.
- Set off an apposite (noun referring to previous noun, e.g. my sister, Nancy) or contrasting words/phrases (e.g. I need you, not anyone else.). Set off introductory items, e.g. Sir, are you listening?.
- Set off interrupting or parenthetic items. Before quotation following an introductory phrase, e.g. She said quietly, "I love you." Inside a closing quotation mark, e.g. I said "wash," not "drawer." To show omission, e.g. The thing is, we need time. Between compound qualifiers, e.g. He has big, broad shoulders.
- Between name and title, title and organization, name and degree, surname and Junior/Jr./Senior/Sr. In an inverted name, e.g. Shakespeare, William; Kipfer, Barbara Ann.
- To separate thousands, millions, etc. in number of four or more digits, e.g. 2,000.
- To set off the day of the month, e.g. Their anniversary is June 1, 1991, when they met.
- To set off elements of an address, e.g. Write to him at The Language Centre, University of Exeter, Exeter, England EX4 4QH. After the salutation in informal correspondence, e.g. Dear T.B., and after the complimentary close in all correspondence, e.g. 'Respectfully,'.

Dash or **--**

- Used to denote a sudden change or break in a sentence, e.g. "He was gone -- heaven forbid -- for an hour and no one knew where he was." No spaces are added before or after a dash and do not combine with a colon, comma, or semicolon.
- Other common uses:
    - As a substitute for parentheses or commas in an attempt to clarify meaning or place emphasis, e.g. "She has this to accomplish today -- work, study, cook, and household duties -- as well as take care of her child."
    - Before an amplification, definition, explanation, or summary statement, e.g. "To be or not to be -- that is a question we each ask ourselves at night before we turn out the light."
    - At the end of an unfinished word or sentence, e.g. "The story went on to say that--."
    - To precede an author's credit for a quotation and as a way of setting off something in page design, as for lists, outlines.
- The en dash is used in typeset material and is shorter than the em dash, which is represented in typewritten material by two hyphens. It is used as a replacement for a hyphen when the meaning intended is `up to and including', e.g. 1987-91, Monday-Saturday. A two-em (four hyphens) dash is used to show missing letters in a word. A three-em (six hyphens) dash is used to show that a word is left out or that an unknown word or number is to be supplied.

Division of words. Guidelines for dividing words at the end of lines are:

- Pay attention to the way the word is pronounced (syllables) and do not break the word so that it would be mispronounced or misunderstood.
- Divide between doubled consonants, except when it would divide a simple base form, e.g. re-com-men-da-tion, but sell-ing, buzz-er. When the doubled consonant comes before `-ing', the second consonant stays with the `-ing'.
- Do not divide a one-syllable word, even if there is an inflected ending like `-ed', e.g. spelled, bummed.
- Do not divide a word so that one or two letters is left either at the end of one line or the beginning of another. Division after a prefix, putting it at the end of a line, is permissible.
- Do not divide words of six letters or less.
- Divide hyphenated words at the hyphen.
- Do not divide before the following suffixes; they should not be at the beginning of a line alone nor should they be divided themselves: -able, -ceous, -cial, -cion, -cious, -geous, -gion, -gious, -ible, -sial, -sion, -tial, -tion, -tious.
- When a vowel alone forms a syllable in the middle of a word, keep it with the previous syllable, e.g. physi-cal.
- A liquid or silent `l' syllable at the end of a word or part of an inflected ending should not be put on the next line alone, e.g. read-able, twin-kling.
- Proper nouns, numerals, and abbreviations should not be divided.

Ellipsis points or **ellipses** or **points of ellipsis** or **suspension points** or **...**

- Used when words are omitted: three periods in the middle of a sentence, four at the end of a

sentence (unless the sentence ends with a question mark or exclamation point: then it is '...?' or '...!').

- May also indicate a break or suspension in speech.
- Punctuation that normally falls before or after the ellipsis points can be retained for clarity.
- A space precedes and follows ellipses.

Exclamation point or **!**

- Used to show surprise, incredulity, praise, a command -- to show force in statement.
- May be used to replace a question mark when irony or an emphatic tone is meant, e.g. How could you!
- An exclamation point and question mark may be used together to show extreme force.
- If the exclamation point ends a sentence in a quotation, the comma or period is dropped.

Hyphen or **-**

Used:

- to connect the elements of some compound words, especially ones of three or more words
- to divide a word at the end of a line
- in fractions and compound numbers
- in measurements with numbers and unit
- in ages with number and unit
- in prefixed words when a vowel is doubled or consonant is tripled
- for certain prefixes as ex-
- to make a word clear from its homonym, as recover and re-cover between a prefix and the

second word if it is a proper noun and proper noun compounds
- for certain suffixes as -elect
- compounds which begin with a single capital letter as H-bomb
- for compound adjectives, including those where the first adjective ends in -ly, as `scholarly-written piece' (but not for compound modifiers of adverb-and-adjective as `widely known author')
- for directions, as north-northwest
- for words spelled out letter-by-letter, as y-e-s
- to show stuttering speech.

Numerals/numbers

- The most common, Arabic numerals, are 0, 1, 2, etc.
- Roman numerals use the letters I (1), V (5), X (10), L (50), C (100), D (500), M (1000) and are used number wars, sequence in family, rulers, vehicles, major headings in documents.
- Cardinal numbers are 0, zero, 1, one, etc.
- Ordinal numbers are 1st, first, 2nd, second, etc.
- In general, write out the first nine cardinal (1-9) numbers (except for address numbers 2-9, dates, decimals, game scores, highways, latitude/longitude, mathematical expressions, measurement/weight, money/financial data, percentages, proportion, scientific expressions, statistics, technical expressions, temperature, time, unit modifiers, votes, and numbers not written out in a proper noun) and any number that begins a sentence; use figures for 10 and above.

- The first nine ordinal (1st-9th) numbers are usually written out, especially when describing order in time or location.
- Governmental, political, and military units numbered one hundred or less are usually written out. Labor unions and other organizations often use figures.
- Numbers of one million and above are easier to read if written as figures with the word `million', `billion', etc.
- Written-out numbers between 21 and 99 and hyphenated.
- Figures of four digits may be written with or without a comma.
- Numbers of checks, contracts, military hours, pages, policies, rooms/suites, streets, telephone numbers, and years are written without commas.
- Check, telephone, and serial numbers may contain hyphens.
- A fraction used as a modifier is hyphenated, e.g. three-quarter time.
- A fraction used with a whole number is written as a figure, e.g. 5 1/2, as are measurements that are fractions, e.g. 1/10 mile.
- A measurement as a modifier is hyphenated, e.g. nine-pound boy.
- Numbers in a series or set are written alike, e.g. `50 to 60 participants'.
- Street names that are numbers are written out, but may also be written as figures from 13 and over.
- Document divisions are usually written as figures, e.g. Psalm 100, page 7.
- Ordinal numbers are not used in full dates; commas are not used in between just a month and year.

- Money designations of one or two words are often written out, e.g. one dollar.
- Times are usually spelled out in text and may be when used with `o'clock'. Figures are used for exact times, e.g. 8:13. Times may be used with a.m./A.M., p.m./P.M., `o'clock', or `in the ~' but those designations should not be combined.
- Year and page numbers may omit hundreds and replace with a dash, e.g. 1989-90, pp 140-50.
- If an abbreviation or symbol is used with a number, it should be written as a figure.
- Numbers should not be divided at the end of lines.
- Plurals of written-out numbers are formed by adding `s' or `es'.
- Plurals of figures are formed by adding `s' or `'s'.

Parentheses or **( )**

- Used to enclose supplementary matter that is not intended to be part of the statement.
    - At the end of a sentence, the period follows the closing parenthesis.
    - A complete sentence within parentheses has its own punctuation.
- Parentheses may indicate something important, but their use is interruptive. Uses include:
    - Numeric data, including Arabic numerals confirming a spelled-out number, and for other mathematical expressions.
    - Explanation, definitions, translations, alternatives.
    - Abbreviation of the spelled-out word or the spelled-out form of an abbreviation.
    - Bibliographical data.
    - Cross-references.

- o Comments about a text.
- o Numbers or letters indicating an item in a series are enclosed as, (1), (2), (3) and (a), (b), (c).

Period or **.**

Punctuation used:

- At the end of a declarative sentence and after a question that is a suggestion and is not requiring an answer.
- After a letter or number indicating an item in a series.
- As part of an ellipsis.
- In numbers with integers and decimals.
- In some abbreviations.
- After a person's initials.
- Centred, to indicate multiplication, as $2 \cdot 3 = 6$.

Possessives

- The possessive case of most nouns is formed by adding an apostrophe or an apostrophe and `s'.
- Possessive for singular and plurals nouns not ending in an `s' or `z' sound are formed by adding `'s'.
- Possessive of singular nouns ending in an `s' or `z' sound are usually formed by adding `'s', though some writers may prefer just an apostrophe. An exception is for multi-syllabic words if they are followed by a word beginning with an `s' or `z' sound.
- Possessive of plural nouns ending in an `s' or `z' sound are formed by adding only an apostrophe.

An exception is for one-syllable irregular plurals: add `'s'.

- In a phrase: individual possession is shown with a `'s' added to each noun, e.g. Barbara's and Kyle's bicycles; joint possession is shown by adding an apostrophe or `'s' to the last noun in the series or by adding an apostrophe or `'s' to each noun, e.g. Barbara and Paul's house.

Question mark or **?**

- Punctuation after a direct interrogatory statement and one expressing doubt.
- It is used after each element of an interrogative series when the series is not enumerated or lettered.
- Do not put a comma after a question mark that falls within quotation marks.

Quotation marks or **" "**

Quotation marks are used:

- For direct quotations. Each part of an interrupted quotation begins and ends with quotation marks, as "I am getting worried," she said, "that he has not called."
- For expressions following introductory terms as `entitled', `the word', `the term', `marked', `designated', `classified', `named', `endorsed', `cited as', `referred to as', `signed', which indicate a borrowing or special use.
- Around words referred to as words, as "I said "tomato," not "potato.", and around sentences referred to as sentences, as An example of a question is, "Where the heck are they?".

Source: dictionary.com; tefl.net

- Quotations may be used around mottos, slang, misnomers, coined words, proverbs and maxims, ironical reference, and unspoken dialogue.
- For translations of foreign terms.
- For single letters within a sentence, e.g. His name begins with a "K."
- Sometimes to enclose document titles and parts, and addresses within a sentence, e.g. Her book, "14,000 things to be happy about," is a best seller.
- In American usage, punctuation that goes inside the closing quotation mark includes a period or comma (but not a colon or semicolon). In British usage, the period and the comma go outside the quotation mark. The dash, question mark, and exclamation point fall inside quotation marks if they belong with the quoted matter but outside if they punctuate the sentence as a whole.
- For quotations which extend beyond one paragraph, a quotation mark begins each paragraph and the closing quotation mark is at the end of the last paragraph.
- Some writers now leave a preceding comma out before a quotation.
- Some writers leave periods and commas outside of quoted material if that punctuation belongs to the sentence as a whole.

Semicolon or **;**

- Punctuation sometimes regarded as a weak period or strong comma and is used in ways similar to periods and commas.
- A semicolon can mark the end of a clause and indicate that a clause following is closely related to it.

- A semicolon can also divide a sentence to make meaning clearer. A semicolon is placed outside quotation marks and parentheses.
- Uses in detail are:
  - Separates independent clauses in place of a coordinating conjunction or ellipsis.
  - Separates independent clauses when the second begins with a conjunctive adverb as: accordingly, all the same, also, as a result, besides, by the same token, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, indeed, in that case, likewise, moreover, nevertheless, on the other hand, otherwise, still, then, therefore, and thus. These usually explain or summarize preceding matter.
  - Clarifies meaning in long sentences and in those with several commas. The indication of a strong pause by the semicolon helps the reader understand the meaning.
  - May be used before explanation phrases and clauses as: e.g., for example, for instance, i.e., namely, that is.
  - Separates lists or phrases in a series when the phrases themselves have commas.

Single quotation marks or ' '

- Single quotation marks are used to enclose a quotation within a quotation
- May be used around words that are special terms or for words referred to as words.

Slash or /

- Punctuation also called the virgule, diagonal, solidus, oblique, or slant.
- It is mainly used to show that a word is not written out.
- A slash represents `or' or `and/or' in alternatives as yours/mine.
- A slash may represents `and', as 1990/91, Minneapolis/St. Paul.
- A slash may represent some prepositions -- at, for, versus, with, as c/o addressee, w/dressing.
- A slash represents `per' or `to' in measures and ratios, as 2 ft./min., price/earnings ratio.
- A slash is used to separate numbers in dates, fractions, and telephone numbers.
- A slash may be used to separate parts of an address or divide lines of poetry when written as continuous text.
- A slash is used in pronunciations (phonemic transcriptions).

Common errors in punctuation:

- Using the apostrophe for plurals : plural's is incorrect, plurals is correct.
- Using the punctuation mark inside the quotation mark: correct for American usage; punctuation marks go outside the quotation marks in British English.
- Using punctuation in parentheses : the punctuation goes inside the parentheses if what is within the parentheses constitutes a complete sentence.

Q. What makes a sentence passive or active?

A. Active vs. passive is dictated by the verbs used.

For example, "Picasso painted a picture" uses an active verb. "The picture was painted by Picasso" uses a passive verb. You should generally avoid writing in the passive voice as it is a more roundabout way of writing and you should try to be direct.

The times when it is more appropriate to use the passive voice are:

- for emphasis in a punch line, you can put the one performing the action at the end of the sentence.
- for a sentence when the person who performed the action is not mentioned, e.g. for "The criminal has been imprisoned" the author of the sentence does not mention who did the actual imprisoning.
- When you do not know who did something, or it is not important.

Q. What is redundancy in writing?

A. The use of language that can be eliminated without incurring a loss of meaning.

Redundancy in writing usually comes from these sources:

- Wordy phrases. Example: "in view of the fact that" instead of "since" or "because."
- Employing obvious qualifiers when a word is implicit in the word it is modifying. Example: "completely finish." If you have *in*completely finished something, you haven't finished it at all.

- Using two or more synonyms together. Example: "thoughts and ideas."

Q. What is a simile and some examples of it?

A. A simile is a word or phrase by which anything is likened to something else.

A simile is a figure of speech in which two quite unlike things are compared. A simile is often introduced by *like* or *as*. Examples are "happy as a clam," "as easy as pie," and "soft as sifted flour." It differs from a metaphor in that the comparison in a metaphor is a implicit: "Achilles is a lion," "She's a tiger," "He seems gruff but he's really just an old pussycat." The statement "that man is a fox" is a metaphor; but "that man is like a fox" is a simile.

Q. When do you capitalize words like mother, father, grandmother, and grandfather when writing about them?

A. When they are used as proper nouns

You should capitalize these when referring to your own relatives: "Hello, Mother." A good rule to follow is to capitalize them if they are used as proper nouns. If used as common nouns, don't capitalize: "We honour all mothers in May."

Q. How can I figure out what a Roman numeral stands for?

A.:

You *add* the numbers together if numbers of the same size are placed next to each other or if a smaller number is placed to the *right* of a larger number. For example:

- II = 2
- III = 3
- VI = 6
- VIII = 8
- XX = 20
- XXI = 21
- CC = 200

You *subtract* the smaller number from the larger if a smaller number is placed to the *left* of a larger number. For example:

- IV = 4
- IX = 9
- XL = 40
- CD = 400
- CM = 900

Sometimes you will perform both operations:

- XIV = 14
- XIX = 19

Conversion Table	
1	I
2	II
3	III
4	IV
5	V
6	VI
7	VII
8	VIII
9	IX
10	X
20	XX
30	XXX
40	XL
50	L
60	LX
70	LXX
80	LXXX
90	XC
100	C
500	D
1000	M

- XXIV = 24
- XCI = 91
- XCIX = 99
- MCM = 1900
- MCMXLVII = 1947
- MCML = 1950
- MCMLXVIII = 1968
- MCMLXXIX = 1979

Q. What, in general, are the differences between British and American spelling, and why do they exist?

A.:

In the US many nouns become verbs by adding *-ize* (*standardize*). These same words usually end in *-ise* in Britain, despite the British dictionaries which show *-ize* as the main form with *-ise* as an alternative. One consistency is the American *-yze* words (*analyze*) are all *-yse* in Britain.

Sometimes words in British and American English are identical in meaning but spelled differently, as in *sulfur* and *sulphur*, *hemoglobin* and *haemoglobin*. Most words (taken from the French) in Britain ending in *-our* end in *-or* in the US (*color*, *colour*); most words in Britain ending in *-tre* end in *-ter* in the US (*center*, *centre*). The trend in American spelling is to drop letters that are not needed in a word, such as the '**u**' in 'colo**u**r'. The US has a greater tendency to drop silent consonants and vowels, and move to a more phonetic spelling, especially where the old spelling was a French remnant (*tyre*, *tire*).

The irregular form is generally more common in British English and the regular form is more common to American English for these verbs: *burnt, burned*; *dreamt, dreamed*; *learnt, learned*; *smelt, smelled*; *spelt, spelled*; *spilt, spilled*; *spoilt, spoiled*.

Licence and *license* are both valid in the US, but in Britain the former is the noun, the latter the verb (same for *practice* and *practise*). A good dictionary will indicate both American and British spellings when there is a difference.

Why do the differences exist? Well, America chose to differentiate itself from Britain from its beginnings; spelling was included in that. The spelling of such terms at *theater* instead of *theatre* and *color* instead of *colour* is legacy.

Q. Where can I find a list of periods of time, i.e. lustrum = 5 years, decade = 10 years, score = 20 years, century = 100 years, etcetera?

A.: Here are some:

- millennium = 1000 years
- half-millennium = 500 years
- century = 100 years
- half-century = 50 years
- score = 20 years
- decade = 10 years
- lustrum or half-decade = 5 years
- quadrennium or olympiad = 4 years
- triennium = 3 years
- and biennium = 2 years

Q. When do you use *well* or *good*?

A. In general, use *well* to describe an activity, *good* to describe a thing.

When it is an activity being described, use *well*, as in "He did well in the spelling bee." *Well* is an adverb in that instance, describing the verb. When it is a condition or a passive state being described, use *good*, as in "You're looking good tonight!" *Good* is an adjective in this instance, describing the noun.

With *feel good/feel well*, it is more complicated. In this case, the word *well* is being used an adjective meaning 'healthy' — so it is OK to say, "I feel well." You can say "I feel good" also, but it is more informal, borderline slangy.

Punctuation of abbreviations

The rule for punctuation of abbreviations (which is not rigidly observed) is:

- when the last letter of the full word and the abbreviation are the same: no full stop (example: Limited > Ltd)

- when the last letter of the full word and the abbreviation are *not* the same: full stop (example: Company > Co.)

a/c	account	**Ltd**	Limited
a.m.	before noon *(ante meridiem)*	**Mr**	Mr *(pronounced* Mister)
a.s.a.p.	as soon as possible	**Mrs**	Mrs *(pronounced* Missiz)
cc:	copies to	**Miss**	Miss
c/o	care of	**Ms**	Ms *(pronounced* Miz)
Co.	Company		
e.g.	for example *(exemplii gratia)*	**no.**	number
		p.a.	per annum
enc.	enclosed	**P.L.C.**	Public Limited Company
exc.	excluding		
f.o.b.	free on board	**p.m.**	after noon *(post meridiem)*
G.M.T.	Greenwich Mean Time		
		p.t.o.	please turn over
HQ	headquarters	**Rd**	Road
i.e.	that is *(id est)*	**re**	referring to
inc.	including	**St**	Saint
Inc.	Incorporated	**St.**	Street
		v.a.t.	value added tax