

Capitalization and Punctuation Rules

Capital Letters

Always use a capital letter for...

the first word of a sentence	Thank you for the letter.
the first word in a quotation	She said, “Today is beautiful.”
the greeting and closing in a letter	Dear John Sincerely, Sherry
the names of days, months, and holidays	Thursday November Thanksgiving
people’s first and last names, their initials, and their titles	Mrs. Smith and Phil were seen by Dr. Lee
the word that names yourself - I	My friend and I love horses.
the names of streets, cities, and states	Palm Avenue Mesa, Arizona
the names of specific buildings and monuments	Statue of Liberty Empire State Building
the titles of stories, movies, TV shows, video games, etc.	Night at the Museum Star Wars

Quotation Marks

Use quotation marks...

before and after words that are spoken by someone	“I love to read chapter books,” said Sharon.
around words that are being discussed or emphasized	A man-made lake is called a “reservoir.”
newspaper articles, titles of poems, songs, short stories, etc	“Hot and Cold” by Katie Perry

End Punctuation

Use a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point...

period – when you end a statement	I like cookies.
question mark – when you ask a question	Do you like cookies?
exclamation point – when you have an excited or emotionally charged statement	I absolutely love cookies!

Commas

Always use a comma to separate...

a city and a state	Miami, Florida	Mesa, Arizona
the date from the year	December 25, 2009	April 15, 2010
the greeting and closing of a letter	Dear Jane,	Sincerely,
two adjectives that tell about the same noun	Shawn is a clever, smart boy.	

Use a comma to show a pause...

between three or more items in a series	Jim likes pizza, spaghetti, and lasagna.
between the words spoken by someone and the rest of the sentence	“I know,” answered Mary.
after a short introductory phrase	After all that candy, nobody was hungry for cake.

Apostrophes

Add an apostrophe...

when there is one owner, add an apostrophe first, and then add an S	The cat's dish is empty.
when there is more than one owner, add an S first and then an apostrophe	All of the cats' dishes were empty.
when you put two words together to make a contraction	Now he's on the table.

Colons

Add a colon...

after the salutation of a business letter	Dear Ms. Matthews:
between numerals indicating time	Meet me at the park at 12:35.
to introduce a list	Please bring the following items to class: pencil, paper, eraser, and folder.