

MECHANICS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW		
TOPIC	WHEN TO USE	EXAMPLES
colon :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Before a list or series after an independent clause ➤ Before a summary or explanatory statement in a complex sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Javier planted new flowers: azaleas, roses, and gladioli. ➤ Stan really had only one choice: skip practice and pick up his sister.
semicolon ;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To join two independent clauses in a compound sentence ➤ Between items in a list if the items contain commas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lowrie laughed; I laughed, too. ➤ I visited Key Largo, Florida; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Seattle, Washington.
dash –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Before and after an interruptive element in a sentence ➤ To indicate an incomplete thought or unfinished dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The librarian – she’s really nice – did not charge me a fine. ➤ I can’t remember where –
hyphen -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Between number and fraction words ➤ Between words in a compound adjective ➤ At the end of a line to divide the last word between syllables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Twenty-five workers signed up for the training. ➤ He is such a smarty-pants. ➤ We planned to pick up a water-melon for the party.
parentheses ()	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Before and after material that is explanatory or extra ➤ Before and after letters or numbers used in lists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The AED (Automated External Defibrillator) is in the hall. ➤ Dora had three locations on her map: (1) bridge, (2) forest, and (3) waterfall.
ellipsis points ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To show there are missing words in a direct quotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We’ve all heard the saying “To err is human...”; I remembered it today as I was driving along I-95.
square brackets []	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To show you have added words in quoted material ➤ If writing an MLA paper and inserting ellipsis points in quoted material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ursula Le Guin said, “The creative adult is the child who has survived [adolescence].” ➤ Patrick Henry said, “Give me liberty, or [...] death.”
period .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To mark the end of a statement, command, or request ➤ After initials or abbreviations ➤ In currency and decimal numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Don’t forget to change the cat litter. ➤ Have you read J.K. Rowling’s latest novel? ➤ Corrine makes \$9.86 an hour.
exclamation point !	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To mark the end of an exclamatory sentence or a strong command ➤ After a strong interjection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Don’t let the cat out! ➤ Wow!
question mark ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To mark the end of a question ➤ To indicate doubt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Did you remember to feed the cats? ➤ This wire attaches here?
<i>italics</i> or <u>underlining</u> (Use one or the other consistently in your writing.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Foreign words or phrases ➤ Titles of large or complete works such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, television series, and other works of art ➤ Titles of ships, satellites and trains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The phrase <i>carpe diem</i> means to seize the day. ➤ <i>Dead Poets Society</i> was an inspirational movie. ➤ The museum has a new exhibit on the <i>Titanic</i>.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>For help with commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, capitalization, or spelling refer to the COMMAS AND APOSTROPHES, QUOTATION MARKS, CAPITALIZATION, or SPELLING handouts located in the English Writing Lab or online at www.palmbeachstate.edu/slc.xml under SLC Student Resources/English.</i></p>		

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LEARN MORE

Don't forget: students can always ask tutors or their teachers for an explanation of anything that's not clear.

Texts available to use in the SLC English Writing Lab:

The Bedford Handbook, Seventh Edition,
Diana Hacker
Pages 433 – 466

Evergreen, A Guide to Writing with Readings,
Ninth Edition, Susan Fawcett
Chapter 37

Online:

[Mechanics](#)

[Punctuation](#)

[Punctuation](#)

[Dashes and Parentheses](#)

[Underlining and Italicizing](#)

[Abbreviations, Numbers, Italics, and Spelling](#)

[Writing Numbers](#)

[Grassroots Companion Site](#)

[Evergreen Companion Site](#)

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PRACTICE

Directions: In each of the sentences below, add any necessary punctuation marks or underlining.

1. As a student at PBCC Palm Beach Community College, I've had many learning opportunities outside of the classroom 1 meeting new people in the student activities building, 2 exploring career options at the career center, and 3 receiving academic assistance in the student learning center.
2. Thirty four audience members asked for a refund because there was no sound for the first ten minutes of the film The Incredible Hulk.
3. Have you read Charlotte's Web. The author, E B White, has written numerous children's books including Stuart Little.
4. Unbelievable. Do you mean to tell me that you have never voted.
5. I have lived in so many places before finally settling in West Palm Beach, Florida. I've lived in Stafford, Virginia, Boston, Massachusetts, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
6. Mark Antony turns the mob against Brutus with his subtle speech, which begins harmlessly enough with "Friends ..., lend me your ears," his simple plea at Julius Caesar's funeral for his countrymen to listen to his speech resulted in civil war.