

Introduction: Why Punctuation Matters

Welcome to Module 3: Correct Use of Punctuation. Why is punctuation important in transcription? Punctuation gives meaning to the words. A transcriber needs to type accurately what the speaker wants to convey. A punctuation error can often completely change the intended meaning of a sentence. Let's take a look at the picture below and read the featured article's subtitle. Do you think the sentence conveys clearly what it actually means? What's missing? If you had a good laugh after reading the sentence, then you totally get what is missing. A simple comma can alter the meaning big time.

Read the sentences below and try to differentiate the meaning of one from the other. The first sentence sounds scary—it's like from a horror movie or something. In the second sentence, we added a comma after the word "eat," and the sentence becomes an invitation from someone. Do you think that's possible? Can the murderer actually protest his innocence after his death? That sounds impossible, don't you think?

To correct the sentence, we place a period after the word "innocence" and a comma after the word "after." Now let's take a look at another hilarious example. In this sentence, the punctuation marks are not correctly used. We give the correct meaning to this sentence by using the correct punctuation. So, can you see the big difference now? If punctuation is not used correctly, it completely changes the meaning of the sentence. Sometimes punctuation is taken for granted in transcription, when in fact it plays a huge role.

Section 1: The Period

- **Rule number one:** Always place the period inside the quotation mark.
- **Rule number two:** Place the period outside a single quote.
- **Rule number three:** If single quotation marks are used inside quotation marks, place the period before the final single quotation mark.
- **Rule number four:** If a sentence ends with a question mark or exclamation point, the period is omitted.

Section 2: The Comma

- **Rule number one:** Use a comma after the first digit of a four-digit number.
- **Rule number two:** A degree or certification shown after a person's name should be set off with commas.
- **Rule number three:** When directly addressing someone, it should be set off with commas.
- **Rule number four:** When a date consists of the day of the month followed by the year, the

day of the month should be followed by a comma. When the day of the week is provided before the month, the day of the week should be followed by a comma.

- **Rule number five:** Commas should be used to separate geographic elements. The final geographic element should also be followed by a comma when it appears in the middle of a sentence.
- **Rule number six:** When a noun is modified by more than one adjective, each of which independently modifies the noun, the adjectives should be separated by a comma.
- **Rule number seven:** A comma is required when an adjective or adverb is repeated for emphasis.
- **Rule number eight:** A comma is used to set off introductory words to a sentence.
- **Rule number nine:** Use a comma when a sentence starts with a mild interjection.
- **Rule number 10:** An afterthought that follows the main clause can be set off with a comma.
- **Rule number 11:** A comma should be used before a question tag. Question tags are the short questions that we put on the end of sentences.
- **Rule number 12:** The trend with labels is to omit the comma.
- **Rule number 13:** Do not use a comma between the month and the year when they are the only two elements in the date.
- **Rule number 14:** Do not use any commas if conjunctions separate all the items of the series from each other.
- **Rule number 15:** The phrase "as well as" usually doesn't regard commas unless it's part of a non-restrictive clause. What is a non-restrictive clause? It is an adjective clause that adds extra or non-essential information to a sentence. The meaning of the sentence would not change if the clause were to be omitted.
- **Rule number 16:** When a sentence ends with an adverb that is essential to the meaning of the sentence, the adverb should not be set off with a comma.
- **Rule number 17:** Non-restrictive information is set off with a comma. When the non-restrictive is found within rather than at the end of the sentence, it should be set up with a pair of commas.
- **Rule number 18:** Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two independent clauses.
- **Rule number 19:** Do not use a comma before a coordinating conjunction if the sentence contains only one independent clause.
- **Rule number 20:** If the dependent clause comes before the independent clause, separate it with a comma.
- **Rule number 21:** Use commas to set off expressions that interrupt the sentence flow—expressions like "nevertheless," "after all," "by the way," "on the other hand," "however," and others.

Section 3: Semicolons, Colons, and Others

- **Semicolon Rule number one:** Use a semicolon between two independent clauses linked by a transitional expression.
- **Semicolon Rule number two:** Use a semicolon between two independent clauses when a coordinating conjunction is not used.
- **Colon Rule number one:** Use a colon before introducing a list, a formal quotation, or an enumeration.
- **Colon Rule number two:** Do not use a colon when the listed items are incorporated in the flow of the sentence.
- **General Rule:** Here's the general rule: a comma or a period is always placed inside the quotation marks.
- **Apostrophe Rule number one:** The word "it's" with an apostrophe 's' is the contraction of "it is." "Its" without an apostrophe is the possessive form.
- **Apostrophe Rule number two:** Use an apostrophe to indicate the last two digits of a year. Don't use an apostrophe when referring to a person's age.
- **Apostrophe Rule number three:** Do not use apostrophes to form a plural noun. (Exception: Use an apostrophe when certain abbreviations, letters, or words are used as nouns).
- **Apostrophe Rule number four:** The possessive of a singular noun is formed by adding an apostrophe and an 's', whether the singular noun ends in 's' or not.
- **Question Mark Rule number one:** Use a question mark at the end of the sentence when the sentence begins as a statement but contains a question within it.
- **Question Mark Rule number two:** Place the question mark outside the final quotation if the entire sentence is a question (note that what is quoted is not a question).
- **Question Mark Rule number three:** Place the question mark inside the final quotation if a quoted question appears within a question.
- **Question Mark Rule number four:** Use a question mark within the final dash when a sentence contains a dashed expression that is a question.
- **Question Mark Rule number five:** When a direct question occurs within a large sentence, it takes a question mark.
- **Dash:** Use a pair of dashes when the speaker suspends but does not cancel the idea in mid-sentence and then continues the idea.
- **Hyphen:** Two or more words that collectively act as an adjective should be hyphenated when they appear immediately before the noun they modify. This helps prevent misreading.

Video Link: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=TO089-YR6HM>