

# Punctuation

## Comma

In a series or list, do not use a comma before the conjunction.

- Example: The students came from California, Colorado, Maryland and Nebraska.

Do not use a comma to separate two independent sentences; use a semicolon.

- Example: The snow started to fall during the night; the morning commute was awful.

Use a comma before a conjunction when it connects two independent sentences.

- Example: A typical master's degree takes two years, but many universities offer accelerated master's degree programs.

Do not use a comma before a conjunction connecting a dependent clause to an independent clause.

- Example: Some people complete their master's degree in one year because of the program's structure.

## Colon

Use a colon to introduce lists.

- Example: Include the following documents in your application: completed application, personal essay and three letters of recommendation.

Capitalize the words immediately following the colon only if it is the beginning of a complete sentence or proper noun.

- Example: The professor promised this: If every student earned a B on the exam, there would be no final report due at the end of the semester.

Use a colon to introduce long quotes.

Do not use a colon with a verb.

- Example:  
(Incorrect) Admission requirements are:  
(Correct) Admission requirements: -or- The admission requirements are as follows:

## Semicolons

Use a semicolon in a series or list when items in the series are long or contain material that must be set apart by commas.

- Example: Faculty conduct research in molecular and cellular pathology and toxicology; drug delivery systems; protein structure and delivery; cancer, heart, lung and blood diseases; and alcohol and drug abuse.

Use a semicolon to connect two independent sentences without a conjunction.

- ○ Example: The paper is due next week; she submitted it today.

## Dashes

Use an em dash (longer) to mark a break in thought.

- Example: He will travel to Europe this summer – if he passes all of his classes. Insert space on each side of the em dash.

Use an en dash (shorter) to indicate a range (it replaces the word through).

- Example: 1–10. Do not insert spaces on either side of dashes.

## Hyphens

See the [hyphenation](#) <sup>[1]</sup> section in this style guide for usage and rules.

## Periods

Use a period at the end of a sentence.

## Quotation Marks

Punctuation always goes inside quotation marks.

- Example: Professor Smith said, “Classes are canceled next week.”

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### Links

[1] <https://www.cu.edu/university-relations/hyphenation>