

Summary of Punctuation Marks

Period . Indicates the end of a complete sentence or follows abbreviations. *Mr. Ed is a horse.*

Exclamation Point ! Indicates a command, an expression of strong emotion, or an emphatic phrase or sentence. *What a horse!*

Question Mark ? Indicates the end of a direct question. *Is he really a horse?*

Comma , Indicates separation of sentence elements for purposes of clarity.

These are the most common uses of the comma:

- After an introductory word group before an independent clause:
In the opening theme, the lyrics explain the premise of the show.
- Between independent clauses: *I waved, and he stopped to talk.*
- Non-essential element added to an independent clause: *I learned the name of Wilbur's horse, which I didn't know before.*
- Phrase inserted into a clause: *The TV show Mr. Ed, once a popular sitcom, is now languishing in obscurity.*
- Dialogue tags with verbs of saying: *Mr. Ed would drawl, "Hello, I'm Mr. Ed."*
- Between all separate items in a series: *Mr. Ed eats oats, hay, and barley.*
- Between coordinate adjectives, i.e., if they can be said "adjective and adjective noun": *He's a walking, talking, sarcastic horse.*

Semi-Colon ; Indicates separation of independent clauses when no conjunction is present and a close relationship (one that is too strongly broken up by a period) exists between the two clauses.

You should talk to Mr. Ed; he's sure to give you an answer.

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Colon : Introduces words, phrases or clauses that explain, amplify, exemplify, or summarize the preceding independent clause.

He eats mostly grains: oats, corn, and barley.

NOT: The things he likes best are: oats, corn and barley. (A colon should not be used unless the words before the colon make an independent clause.)

Apostrophe ' Indicates the possessive case of nouns and the omission of letters or numbers in a contraction. (See our apostrophe handout for more details.)

In the '60s era TV series, he's always getting Wilbur's goat.

Parentheses () Enclose material that is incidental to a sentence and that is not grammatically part of the sentence.

Mr. Ed's jokes (dubbed, of course) were very bad.

Brackets [] Enclose words or passages in quoted material to indicate the insertion of words written by someone other than the original writer, and to enclose material already within parentheses.

Wilbur said, "I'm always putting my foot in his [Mr. Ed's] mouth."

Quotation Marks " " Enclose direct quotations, whether of speech or of writing, and enclose words or phrases used in a special way, i.e., ironically, or when referring to a word as a thing.

Mr. Ed was "famous" (irony) for saying, "Hello, I'm Mr. Ed." (direct quotation)

Dash — Indicates a sudden or abrupt change in continuity, sometimes in the form of an interruption. A dash consists of two hyphens on many keyboards.

Wilbur was famous for--what was it?--oh, yes, talking.

Ellipsis . . . Indicates the omission of words or sentences in quoted material. Do not use ellipses for omissions at the beginning of quotations, only in the middle or at the end.

"No one can talk to a horse . . . unless . . . the horse is . . . Mr. Ed."

Hyphen - Joins elements of some compound words and compound adjectives before nouns.

Mr. Ed was a slow-talking horse.