

End Punctuation

End punctuation is the punctuation at the conclusion of a sentence. End punctuation tells the reader how to interpret each sentence. There are three types of end punctuation: periods, question marks, and exclamation points.

Periods

Periods end complete sentences. Complete sentences are sentences that make simple statements and include a subject and a verb.

Examples: Mark bought flowers for his girlfriend.
Leena rode her bicycle to school yesterday.

A period can also be used to end indirect questions. Indirect questions report questions rather than ask questions. These are questions expressed as statements.

Examples: Chandler asked if he could go to the bathroom.
I wondered what homework I will have this weekend.

Question Marks

Question marks follow a sentence that asks a direct question. These are questions that seek information.

Examples: When is the next Presidential Election?
Why is the sky blue?

Exclamation Points

An exclamation point indicates surprise or strong emotion. Exclamation points can also be used with sentences that make sharp commands.

Examples: The house is huge!
(The speaker in this sentence is indicating surprise or excitement.)

Rachel, leave the dog alone!
(The speaker in this sentence is making a sharp, direct command.)

Additional Punctuation

Additional punctuation within a sentence is not needed at the end of a sentence or quotation. A comma or period should **not** directly follow a question mark or exclamation point that ends a quotation. Exclamation points and question marks can be used to express diction.

Incorrect Example: “What is for dinner?,” Steven asked.
(The extra comma is not necessary.)

Correct Example: “What is for dinner?” Steven asked.
(Only the question mark is necessary.)

Commas and periods are always placed **inside** the closing quotation mark. A question mark or exclamation point goes **inside** closing quotation marks when the quote itself is posing a question. Punctuation is never placed inside the opening quotation mark.

Examples: “I enjoy watching football,” I said.
Anna asked, “Why is school so long?”

If a question mark or exclamation point is not directly part of the quote, it should be placed **outside** the quotation marks.

Examples: Have you read “The Road Not Taken”?
(The question mark is not part of the title of the poem—it is part of the sentence.)

When did you hear the song “Don’t Stop Believing”?
(The question mark is not part of the title of the song.)

Activity

Place the correct punctuation at the end of each sentence, question, or quotation.

1. Sierra left her job at the firm last week
2. What time is it in Moscow
3. “You should take her on a date”
4. The house is on fire
5. When did you read “Success is Counted Sweetest”
6. Jeffrey wondered when his girlfriend would come home
7. “I want you to work the desk on Friday” said Dr. Mitchell
8. How was your day
9. Nicole asked, “Do you want ice cream”
10. I hope you return to the Writing Center
11. After dropping the vase, Jack wondered what his mother would say

12. "Can you cover my shift on Tuesday" Stephanie questioned
13. Vanessa just started reading "The Tell-Tale Heart"

Answer Key for Activity

1. week.
2. Moscow?
3. date."
4. fire!
5. Sweetest"?"
6. home.
7. Friday," said Dr. Mitchell.
8. day?
9. cream?"
10. Center!
11. say.
12. Tuesday?" / questioned.
13. Heart."