

APPENDIX 3: BASIC PUNCTUATION

a We use a **period** (.)

- at the end of a sentence (always)

Hello. My name is Jim. I am a teacher at Gulf Polytechnic in Bahrain. Bahrain is a small island in the Gulf near the coast of Saudi Arabia.

- when we do not write all of a word (often)

Fri. (= Friday)

Aug. (= August)

A. Smith (Mr. Smith's first name begins with "A")

e.g. (= for example; from the Latin *exempli gratia*)

etc. (= and all the others; from the Latin *et cetera*)

b We use a **question mark** (?) at the end of a question (but not at the beginning):

Did John find a nice apartment?

Where is Winnipeg?

Notice the question mark includes the period.

c We use an **apostrophe** (')

- for the genitive of nouns (Unit 49)

My brother's name is Matthew.

My brothers' names are Matthew, Edmund and Martin.

- for short forms of words (Unit 6)

d We use a **comma** (,)

- in a list

In this sentence, **My brothers are Matthew, Edmund and Martin**, you can understand that I have three brothers.

But in this sentence, **My brothers are Matthew Edmund and Martin**, I have only two brothers (one is called Matthew Edmund and the other is called Martin).

Notice that there is no comma before and: **I bought some oranges, some apples, some peaches and a pear.**

- at the beginning and end of some extra information

Matthew, my eldest brother, lives near Athabasca.

Matthew, who lives near Athabasca, is my eldest brother.

- after extra information at the beginning of a sentence

After three months, Matthew found an apartment.

If the weather is good, we can go to the beach.

Finally, I managed to open the door.

But we do not use the comma if we put the extra information at the end of the sentence:

Matthew found an apartment after three months.

We can go to the beach if the weather is good.

- between exact words spoken and the rest of the sentence

“Don’t speak to me,” he said.

She said, “I don’t think you understand.”

NEVER use a comma between subject and verb (*Matthew, found an apartment*) or between the verb and a noun phrase (*Matthew found, an apartment*).

e We use **quotation marks** (“ ”) to show that the words between them are the exact words spoken – “Just relax,” the dentist told me. Notice that they are at the top of the writing (NOT “Just relax”).

f We use an **exclamation mark** (!) to show great surprise or great interest.

Really! That is so strange!

Notice that the exclamation mark includes a period and that it cannot go at the beginning of a sentence (NOT ! Really). We do not use it for any other purpose.

g We use a **hyphen** (-) between two words to show that we must read them as one idea.

a second-hand car a one-way street