

Aula 5

PUNCTUATION IN SENTENCE STRUCTURE

META

Write texts with clear, coherent and well-structured ideas by using correct punctuation.

OBJETIVOS

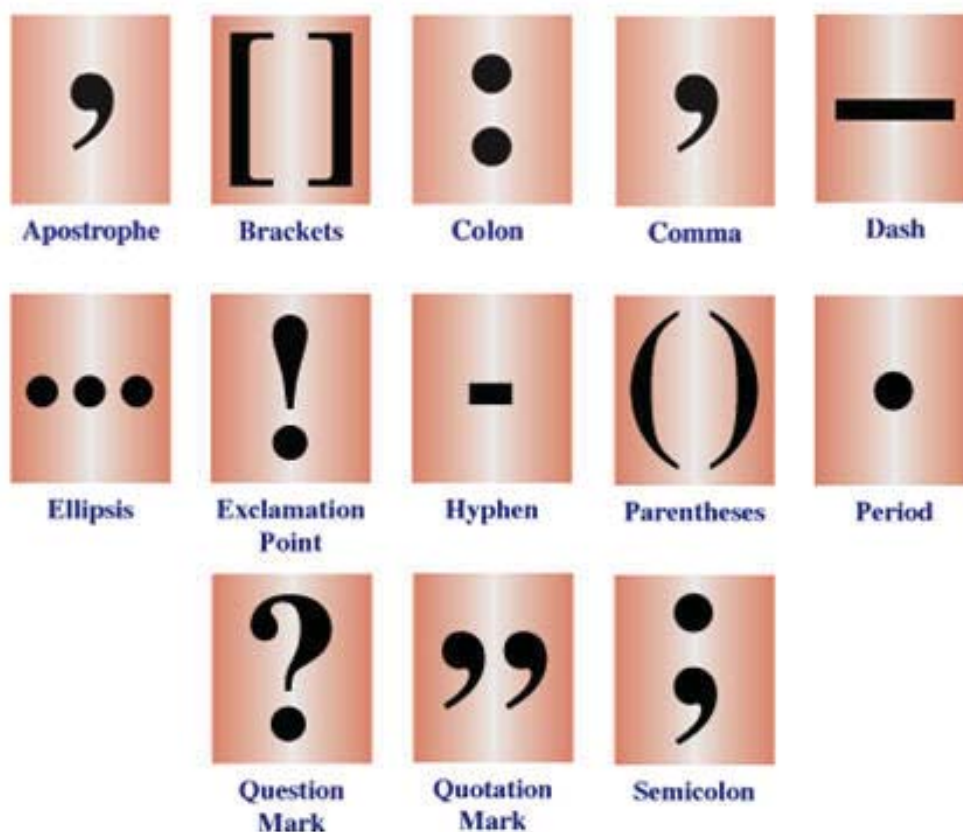
At the end of this class, it is expected that the students:
Make correct use of punctuation marks: period, comma, semicolon, colon, dash, question mark, exclamation mark, and quotation marks;
Have a better understanding how correct punctuation of sentences brings clarity and coherence to writing so that reader misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the text are minimized;
Have more confidence to communicate effectively in writing assignments and compositions.

PRERREQUISITOS

Previous knowledge of using correct punctuation in Portuguese.

Maria Amália Vargas Façanha

INTRODUCTION



<http://blog.bookbaby.com> Last access on May 30th, 2016)

Welcome to class 05! We will be working now with punctuation marks and their varied uses in creating clear and concise writing. This is a great opportunity for you to review this topic that you have certainly studied at some point at school in your Portuguese classes. Yes! The ideas and rules are basically the same.

Let's start by first considering why this topic is so essential. Even though we usually think of punctuation as something "basic" and rarely give it much thought or attention, it is something that we frequently find ourselves in doubt about. It is something that can "make or break" our ability to communicate to our readers. That is to say, punctuation can make our written communication easy for the reader to follow and understand, or it can completely break the written communication in a way that makes reading complicated, difficult, frustrating, and sometimes even unintelligible or incomprehensible.

According to information provided by the website Future Perfect (Online source: <http://www.future-perfect.co.uk/grammar-tip/fun-with-punctuation/>. Last access on April 25th, 2016), missing or incorrectly used punctuation (especially with commas) leads to much ambiguity, meaning that we have to ask the writer what was meant, rather than it being crystal clear

in the first place. Get the punctuation right, and the message will be clear.

Here is a classic illustration of altering punctuation to change meaning found on the above website:

A woman without her man is nothing.

A woman: without her, man is nothing.

So, we must become “friends” with this basic skill of writing: correct punctuation. Once we have reviewed a few basic rules that we are already familiar, and a few that might be new to us, you’ll see that correct punctuation is not a “*bicho de sete cabeças*.” Punctuation is really our “friend” and ally in promoting good harmonious communication between us and our reader.



<http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/> Photo by David Castillo Dominici. Published on 07 October 2011 Stock photo - Image ID: 10060126. Last access on April 30th, 2016.)

Now, let’s begin by looking at some basic punctuation rules and examples.

1) We put a period (.) at the end of every complete sentence and after most abbreviations. Examples:

The class writing assignment is due on Friday.

Prof. Wilson will correct the writing assignments next week.

The next writing exam will be on Aug. 8.

2) We put a question mark (?) at the end of direct question. However, we do not put a question mark at the end of an indirect question. Examples:

Is the class writing assignment due on Friday? (*direct question*)

I wonder if the class writing assignment is due on Friday. (*indirect question*)

3) We put an exclamation mark (!) after an expression of surprise or strong emotion. It is considered informal and mostly used in emails, text

messaging, personal letters and narratives. Its use is generally not appropriate in academic literature (*artigos científicos*). Examples:

Wow! That dress is beautiful!

I can't believe I got that scholarship! Great!

4) Now, let's look at the comma (,), which is probably the most used and, at the same time, most "abused" punctuation mark. But if we just take a few moments to understand the basic rules, the comma's uses will become clearer and more "user-friendly."

a) We need to use a comma to separate each item in a series if there are three or more.

I will take a pen, pencil, and erasure to the exam. (*Note: In Brazil and England, the comma before the "and" is usually not used. In the U.S.A., it is more common to use the comma before the "and."*)

b) Whenever you write dates and addresses, use a comma after every item, including the last.

I was born on May 5, 1948, in Danville, Illinois, and grew up there.

Aracaju, Sergipe, is a coastal city.

c) We can connect two independent clauses (presented in Class 02) by inserting a comma (,) followed by one of the conjunctions (connecting words) listed here: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. These seven conjunctions are frequently referred to by the acronym "fanboys" (**f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r, **y**et, **s**o) in various textbooks specializing in grammar or writing skills, such as *Writing Essentials* (WILSON & GLAZIER, 2003). If we just remember "fanboys," then we can easily remember the associated connecting words. Examples:

The study of punctuation rules is not so difficult, and it can make our writing go smoothly.

The math exam was difficult, but I think I got a good grade.

d) Use a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or dependent clause (presented in Class 02). *Note: If a dependent clause beginning with a conjunction (since, when, after, while, because, etc.) follows an independent clause, then no comma is needed. Example: There will be a cocktail reception directly after Prof. Araújo's lecture instead of another speaker. ("...instead of another speaker." is a dependent clause),*

On Friday, the class will take a field trip to the Natural History Museum.

Finally, we can see that the laboratory test results were conclusive.

After I finish writing this paper, I will turn it in to the professor immediately.

I need to study hard because the exam is on Friday. (*no comma is used since a dependent clause beginning with 'because' follows an independent clause*)

e) If a word or expression (such as *however, therefore, although, moreover, of course, on the other hand, by the way, I believe, I hope, etc.*) interrupts the smooth flow of the sentence, put commas before and after it. If there is no interruption of the flow, then do not use commas.

I know, of course, that some focused study of punctuation will improve my writing. (*an interruption of flow*)

I tried my best, I believe. (*an interruption of flow*)

I believe I tried my best. (*no interruption of flow*)

f) We should put commas before and after additional information included in a sentence that is unnecessary or that is nonessential to understanding the overall meaning of the sentence. This ‘additional, nonessential information’ is often referred to as “non-relative clauses.” “Relative clauses” that give *essential* information referring to a noun or pronoun, frequently beginning with a relative pronoun (*such as who, that, which, etc.*), do not need commas.

My English Linguistics professor, who graduated from Indiana University, will give a lecture in Cary Hall on Thursday night. (*“who graduated from Indiana University” is nonessential because it gives additional information that we can easily remove from the sentence and still understand the overall meaning: “My English Linguistics professor will give a lecture in Cary Hall on Thursday night.”*)

A professor who gives dynamic and interactive classes is needed for maintaining interest in a subject like English Linguistics. (*... “who gives dynamic and interactive classes” is essential information for the meaning of the sentence because it defines what kind of professor is needed. Removing this information would change the sentence’s overall meaning.*)

Noam Chomsky, one of academia’s leading thinkers and a long-time political activist, has been a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology for more than 60 years. (*the information between the two commas is something we can easily remove without changing the sentence’s overall meaning*)

5) We use a semicolon (;) to separate two independent clauses when no “fanboys” conjunction/connecting word is used. We also use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses when a word like *however, furthermore, therefore, or finally* is used between them.

I got a “10” on the final exam; I will certainly graduate now. (*Note: It is equally correct to use a period (.) and create two short sentences: “I got a ‘10’ on the final exam. I will certainly graduate now.” Deciding to use a semicolon or a period in this situation is a writing stylistic question that depends on several subjective points such as the style, the rhythm, and the flow of the text, etc. There is no strict rule here! There is a possibility of writing choice and creativity!*)

The bus is late; however, I think we’ll still make it to class on time. (*‘however’ is used here between two independent clauses*)

6) A colon (:) is used after a complete sentence or statement that introduces a name, a list, a quotation, or an explanation.

UFS recently announced its new English Composition professor: Prof. Amelia Jackson.

When you apply for an international passport, you must present the following documents: valid I.D., recent 3 cm x 4 cm color photo, and proof of residence.

Paulo Coelho had this to say about living: “You have to take risks. We will only understand the miracle of life fully when we allow the unexpected to happen.”

Note: If the sentence leads directly into the quotation, then a comma is used instead of a colon. Example: Paulo Coelho said, “You have to take risks. We will only understand the miracle of life fully when we allow the unexpected to happen.”

7) Put a dash (–) when you want to isolate inserted information or indicate an abrupt change of thought. The dash is a punctuation mark that is “stronger than a comma, less formal than a colon, and more relaxed than parentheses.” (STRUNK & WHITE, 2000, p. 9)

The car’s motor began to make a horrible noise – a grinding, screeching, high-pitched whine.

Note: “Use a dash only when a more common mark of punctuation seems inadequate.” (STRUNK & WHITE, 2000, p. 9). Example: Violence – the kind you see on TV – is not good for our children. This would be better if written as follows: Violence, the kind you see on TV, is not good for our children.

8) Our last punctuation mark discussed in Class 05 is the quotation mark (“...”).

a) We use quotation marks to indicate a direct quotation (the exact words taken from an author, article or book, etc.).

Paulo Coelho said, “When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.”

b) We use quotation marks to indicate the titles of short stories, poems, essays, or other short works.

I wrote an essay titled “English Linguistics from the Perspective of a Second Language Learner” when I was in college.

*Note: ‘Italicize’ the title of longer works such as books, newspapers, magazines, journals, movies, CDs, etc. Example: Wilson and Glazier’s book *Writing Essentials* was referred to several times during Class 05.*



Put missing punctuation marks in the sentences below, or remove unnecessary/wrong punctuation. Note: One or more of the sentences are already correct and do not need any changes.

Whenever I ask my friend Adam for a favor I end up regretting it.

The most used punctuation marks are probably the period comma and semicolon.

Instead of going to a movie tonight I should study for tomorrow's math exam.

First you need to develop good study skills, before you can become a successful student.

The professor who gave tonight's lecture is considered to be the best in the area of Linguistics.

My English Composition teacher who graduated from Purdue University is going to be the featured lecturer at the symposium.

Nobody we hope will try to illegally influence the impeachment process.

Some careers go in and out of demand periodically however people will always need qualified teachers.

The following Paulo Coelho quotation is taken directly from the brainyquote.com website, When you are enthusiastic about what you do, you feel this positive energy. It's very simple.



ACTIVITY

Proofread (revise) the following text by putting punctuation marks where necessary (*Note: only commas, semicolons, and colons are missing*). This activity was adapted from the Glencoe Online Writer's Choice website:

<http://www.glencoe.com/sec/writerschoice/pp/hslessons/grade10/lesson3/answers.shtml>. Last access on April 30th, 2016)

Mohandas Gandhi

Mohandas Gandhi one of India's most popular leaders was a lawyer by trade until he left the law to fight personally for his people's rights against their British rulers. Deeply committed to nonviolence Gandhi was determined to win India's freedom by avoiding confrontation.

Gandhi developed a code of action over the years civil disobedience of nonviolent, noncooperative nature to achieve independence. Whenever armed British soldiers came to enforce the occupation government's laws Gandhi urged his people not to fight. Instead they stood still, refusing to move backward or forward and refusing to give into the soldiers. This crowd of Gandhi followers was always unarmed therefore the British usually retreated. However in the massacre of Amritsar, British soldiers killed almost four hundred of Gandhi's followers.

Gandhi and his followers knew that nonviolent protests could lead to imprisonment and even death but they remained loyal to the independence movement until Great Britain granted the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947.



ACTIVITY

For a deeper understanding of correct punctuation usage that will help you avoid writing confusing sentences due to poor choices, you can visit one of the many Internet websites dedicated to English grammar and writing points. For example, check out the excellently developed website from Purdue University (West Lafayette, Indiana, USA): <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> and its specific link to punctuation <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/6/>.

COMMENTS ON THE ACTIVITIES

Go over the rules and explanations presented on the use of the basic punctuation marks to complete these exercises. Also, review the **“fanboys”** conjunctions/connecting words and the other various connecting words such as *however, therefore, on the other hand*, etc. to refresh your memory of how they can affect punctuation choices when they are used in combination with dependent and independent clauses. Share your answers and doubts with your teachers and classmates.



SUMMARY

In this class, we've reviewed and worked with an important issue in the practice of writing good texts: the use of punctuation marks. As you could observe, we need to pay attention to a few details when making our punctuation choices, such as the use of introductory words or phrases and the use of dependent/independent clauses and their related conjunctions/connecting words. Well-structured sentences help the reader make sense of our written ideas. The correct use of punctuation marks helps us produce great texts with clear ideas.



SELF-EVALUATION

Did I increase my knowledge related to writing in English?
Can I make correct use of punctuation marks?
Has my knowledge of the English language improved considering the studies and practices of previous semesters?



NEXT CLASS

Next class, the focus of your studies will be on Using Pronouns. See you then!

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