Minor Punctuation Marks

Semicolons [;]

* Semicolons separate closely related independent clauses. An independent clause is a complete thought which contains a subject and a verb and can stand on its own.

I like to play many sports; volleyball is my favorite sport and the most enjoyable.

* Semicolons are also used with conjunctive adverbs (however, moreover, nevertheless, consequently, as a result) to join two independent clauses.

Bill Monroe is deceased; however, he is still the father of Bluegrass.

The fire alarm is going off; therefore, a building is on fire.

* Colons are used to list. (A complete sentence must be used before the colon.)

Incorrect - The list is: coffee, eggs, bacon, sugar, and milk.

Correct - The following items were added to the list: coffee, eggs, bacon, sugar, and milk.

* Colons separate an independent clause from a quotation.

Melissa often referred back to her favorite quotation from her mom: Eat all your food on your plate.

* A colon is used after a salutation in a business letter.

Dear Senator Rice:
It has come to our attention:

* To designate a speaker in a play or in a court testimony

Dave: The flower bloomed in the spring.
Mary: And it withered in the fall.

***Reminders***

* Do not use dashes to set apart material when commas would do the work.
* There are no spaces between the dash and the letters on either side of it.
* To achieve the dash I used above, you will have to type two hyphens; the appropriate dash will then appear as you continue typing.
Parentheses [()]
* To include material in a sentence that is not very important or wouldn’t normally fit into the flow of the sentence.

Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (not related to Frosty the snow man) remains America’s favorite poet.

* If the material in the parentheses appears within a sentence and is an incomplete sentence, do not use a capital letter or period to punctuate it; a question mark or exclamation mark may be more appropriate.

Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (know him?) remains America’s favorite poet.

* If the material in the parentheses is a separate sentence, punctuate is as one.

Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost remains America’s favorite poet. (We remember him at Kennedy’s inauguration.)

Minor Punctuation Marks

Semicolons [;]

* Semicolons are used to separate a monster list containing commas.

I have friends from Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Fort Wayne, Indiana; New York, New York; and Detroit, Michigan.

* Semicolons separate closely related independent clauses. An independent clause is a complete thought which contains a subject and a verb and can stand on its own.

I like to play many sports; volleyball is my favorite sport and the most enjoyable.

* Semicolons are also used with conjunctive adverbs (however, moreover, nevertheless, consequently, as a result) to join two independent clauses.

Bill Monroe is deceased; however, he is still the father of Bluegrass. The fire alarm is going off; therefore, a building is on fire.
Colons [:]

* Colons are used to list. (A complete sentence must be used before the colon.)
Incorrect The list is: coffee, eggs, bacon, sugar, and milk.
Correct The following items were added to the list: coffee, eggs, bacon, sugar, and milk.

* Colons separate an independent clause from a quotation.
Melissa often referred back to her favorite quotation from her mom: “Eat all your food on your plate.”

* A colon is used after a salutation in a business letter.
Dear Senator Rice:
It has come to our attention

* To designate a speaker in a play or in a court testimony
  Dave: The flower bloomed in the spring.
  Mary: And it withered in the fall.

Dashes [--]

- The dash is a handy device, informal and essentially playful, telling you that you’re about to take off on a different tack but still in some way connected with the present course only you have to remember that the dash is there, and either put a second dash at the end of the notion to let the reader know that he’s back on course, or else end the sentence, as here, with a period.

* A dash is used to set off parenthetical elements for emphasis or (if it contains commas) for clarity.
  All three of them Bob, Jenny, and Mary enjoy basketball.
  The trail down the Grande Canyon steep, narrow, winding, and lacking guard rails is treacherous.

* They mark sudden breaks in thought, abrupt change in tone.
  I know who she is, Mrs. Mrs. Mrs.-somebody-the mayor of Gilpin-or Springtown.
* **A dash occurs after an introductory list or series.**
  
  Eager, determined to succeed, and scared to death—all of these describe my emotions the first day on the job.

  ***Reminders***
  
  * Do not use dashes to set apart material when commas would do the work.
  * There are no spaces between the dash and the letters on either side of it.
  * To achieve the dash I used above, you will have to type two hyphens; the appropriate dash will then appear as you continue typing.

**Parentheses [()]**

* To include material in a sentence that is not very important or wouldn’t normally fit into the flow of the sentence.

  Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (not related to Frosty the snow man) remains America’s favorite poet.

* If the material in the parentheses appears within a sentence and is an incomplete sentence, do not use a capital letter or period to punctuate it; a question mark or exclamation mark may be more appropriate.

  Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost (know him?) remains America’s favorite poet.

* If the material in the parentheses is a separate sentence, punctuate is as one.

  Thirty-five years after his death, Robert Frost remains America’s favorite poet. (We remember him at Kennedy’s inauguration.)