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DOTTING THE I'S: PUNCTUATION AND MECHANICS

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Preface	5
CHAPTER 1. PUNCTUATION	7
1.1. END MARKS	8
1.2. THE COMMA	13
1.3. THE SEMICOLON	27
1.4. THE COLON	29
1.5. THE APOSTROPHE	31
1.6. THE DASH	34
1.7. PARENTHESES	36
1.8. BRACKETS	38
1.9. THE SLASH	40
1.10. ELLIPSIS MARKS	41
1.11. QUOTATIONS AND QUOTING	43
1.12. PUNCTUATION: REVISION	49
CHAPTER 2. MECHANICS	51
2.1. HYPHENATION AND WORD DIVISION	51
2.2. CAPITALS	54
2.3. ABBREVIATIONS	61
2.4. NUMBERS	67
2.5. UNDERLINING FOR ITALICS. TITLES	71
2.6. MECHANICS: REVISION	77
CHAPTER 3. FORMATTING YOUR WORK	79
3.1. Preparing the Final Copy of the Paper	79
3.2. Preparing for Publication	82
APPENDIX A. COMMON REVISION SYMBOLS	87
APPENDIX B. COMMONLY MISPELLED WORDS	88
REFERENCES	90
SUBJECT INDEX	91

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PREFACE



This guide is designed as a practical resource. In the twenty-first century, we write much more than our parents did in the twentieth. We send emails, SMS's, join blogs, forums and chat-rooms on the Internet. When we apply for a position, the first impression on the potential employer is made by our CV, not by the way we talk or behave. All this gives support to the idea that to assume a certain standard of professional communication, one must organize his or her writing clearly, making it look professional. This is where this book might help.

The first part of it illustrates the uses of punctuation marks. By giving sentences from prominent writers and well-known personalities for both examples and exercises, we hope to show the full range of possibilities for punctuation in contemporary writing as well as expand your background knowledge, which is crucial for non-native speakers of the language. If you study the examples carefully, you will gain understanding of how to use each punctuation mark in your own writing. Besides learning how to use punctuation correctly, you will see how punctuation can give you the freedom to write new kinds of sentences and express ideas in more effective ways.

Surely, there is one supreme rule: that punctuation is best which best serves to make writing subtle, supple, delicate, nuanced and efficient. Of course you can write using only periods and commas for punctuation. You can cook using only salt and pepper for seasoning. But why do it when there are so many seasonings pleasing to a mature palate? – *George Will*

The second part of the guide is dedicated to mechanics – conventional rules such as the one requiring capitalization of the first word of a sentence or writing titles of books and films. You need to follow the conventions so that your writing will look the way formal writing is expected to look.

The third part of the book aims at helping students prepare their paper for submission to the instructor as well as organize their article and acknowledge reference sources in their contribution, in case it is submitted for publication in Europe or the U.S.A.

Finally, the book is followed by the appendices. The first of them is a compact reference guide aiming to assist learners in understanding the corrections made by the instructor. The second appendix helps students avoid the most common mistakes when spelling English words.

The book was conceived as reader-friendly and easy to use. To help the reader easily find the way through it, examples are marked with the following sign:



Important notes, in their turn, are set off like this:



Can you really master punctuation and mechanics? Of course, you can! It is just a matter of knowing the rules the guide provides.