

# Basic Punctuation in English

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How to use punctuation in English?

## The period (.) and comma (,)

We say *period* in American English and *full stop* in British English. It's used to mark the end of a sentence. We also use it:

- After the abbreviations: Ms. Smith (Mrs. or Miss Smith)
- Before the decimals: 1.7 (one point seven)
- In the email addresses: google.com (Google dot com, or Google dot com).

In English, the comma is used to mark the addition of a comment in a sentence.

Compare the following sentences:

- Her sister, who is a doctor, lives in New York.
- Her sister who is a doctor lives in New York.

In dialogues, the comma is placed before the quotation marks:

- "You should leave," he said. → «Tu devrais partir», dit-il.

## THE OTHER SIGNS

The *dash* (-) sometimes replaces the period or comma in emails and SMS:

- If you cook some pasta - or a pizza - keep some for me in the fridge.

*Apostrophes* (') are used to mark possession:

- This is my friend's car.

They are also used for word contractions:

- She's leaving tomorrow.

It is also used instead of suspension points (in a sentence left open, to indicate hesitation for example):

- So - you're going to the cinema again?

The exclamation mark is used to express strong emotion, anger or surprise:

- How can people behave like that!

- [Catch them all.](#)

⚠ Be careful, in English we don't put spaces before punctuation marks ; ! ? :

Quotation marks in English " " (or “ ”) are used to frame quotations and are placed after the comma and period.

- [Albert Camus said, "Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower."](#)

## USEFUL VOCABULARY

SIGN	NOM ANGLAIS
.	a full stop
()	brackets / parentheses (US)
...	dots
:	a colon
" " ou “ ”	inverted commas
/	a slash
!	an exclamation mark
?	a question mark
;	a semi-colon
- (between two words)	a hyphen
—	a dash
,	a comma