

## Punctuation in Academic Writing

### Academic punctuation presentation/ Defining your terms practice

Choose one of the things below and work together to describe its form and uses in as much detail as possible, including contrasting with other things.

- (Round) brackets
- Apostrophe
- Bold
- Bullet points
- Capital letters
- Colon
- Comma
- Dash
- Dot dot dot
- Emoticons (smileys, etc)
- Exclamation mark
- Forward slash
- Full stop
- Hyphen
- Indent
- Italics
- Numbering
- Question mark
- Quotation marks
- Semicolon
- Square brackets

<b>Useful language</b>	
<b>Contrasting</b>	<b>Giving additional information</b>
In contrast whereas unlike	In addition We should also perhaps add A related use is...
<b>Other useful language</b>	
According to... If we take... as an example... Generalising from this example,...	

*Ask your teacher about any which you aren't sure of, especially any differences.*

*Match up the pieces of paper your teacher gives you to make explanations of some of the things above.*

**AND/ OR**

*Write the names of some of the things above in descriptions that you are given.*

*Check your answers, then ask your teacher about any you still aren't sure about.*

*Answer the comprehension questions from memory, then look for the answers in the texts.*

## **Answer the Questions about Punctuation in Academic Writing**

What kinds of words are not capitalised in titles?

What linking words are usually followed by a comma?

What's the difference between semicolons and commas with lists?

What kind of brackets are most likely with the expression "sic" (used to show that there is a mistake in the quoted text)?

Why might a writer join what could be two sentences with a semicolon instead? What changes might be needed to the sentences to make that possible?

Is that recommended by the text?

Give examples of things which are usually in brackets rather than between paired commas.

How do you know whether something should be in brackets or paired commas, rather than just forming part of the flow of the sentence?

What punctuation is similar to a dash? Which are preferred in academic writing?

*Try to answer the questions about the other punctuation.*

How can you divide up information in a list introduced with a colon?

What are the differences between single and double quotation marks? How can you know which ones to use?

Are contractions with apostrophes acceptable in academic writing?

Apart from actual quoting, what can quotation marks be used for in academic writing?



1.

As well as the obvious uses (starting sentences, days of the week, months, proper nouns, etc),

\_\_\_\_\_ are used at the beginning of the main words of names of things such as books and articles.

By “main words”, we mean not grammar words like determiners (“a”, “an”, “the”, etc), prepositions (words like “to”, “of” and “for”) or conjunctions (such as “and” and “but”), unless they are the first word in the title.

It is sometimes confusing whether something should be considered the name of something or simply a description.

For example, “Central London” would mean following the official description of that (zones and two), whereas “central London” would be a more general or personal definition.

2.

A \_\_\_\_\_ “signals a break in the flow of the sentence”, including “separate[ing] extra information from the main idea of the sentence, separate[ing] linking words from the main idea of the sentence [and] resolv[ing] ambiguity.” [1]

Examples of linking words and phrases which are usually followed by a \_\_\_\_\_ include “furthermore”, “however”, “similarly”, “again”, “therefore”, “consequently”, “in conclusion” and “finally”.

\_\_\_\_\_s are also used to divide up lists, with semicolons being used for lists where each item is more complicated.



3.

To quote wholesale from The Chicago Manual of Style 16<sup>th</sup> Edition:

“ \_\_\_\_\_ (in the United States usually just called brackets) are used in scholarly prose mainly to enclose material – usually added by someone other than the original writer – that does not form a part of the surrounding text.

Specifically, [...] \_\_\_\_\_ enclose editorial interpolations, explanations, translations of foreign terms, or corrections.”

They can also be used surrounding three dots to show parts of the text which were edited out, as in the quote given above.

To avoid round brackets within round brackets, the inner ones can also be replaced with \_\_\_\_\_.

4.

The online Macmillan dictionary defines a \_\_\_\_\_ as “a punctuation mark [...] that is used to separate words in a list, or two parts of a sentence that can be understood separately” (retrieved from <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/semicolon>, 10 May 2013),

but the first part of the definition could easily refer to a comma. The difference in this case is that \_\_\_\_\_s are used for more complex lists, often ones introduced with a colon, and perhaps even ones with commas within the items on the list (although this can be confusing and is not usually good style).

The second use given by the Macmillan dictionary is more similar to that of a full stop, but emphasising the connection or similarity between the two clauses more than a full stop would and perhaps replacing a linking word. This use is difficult even for native speakers and so is best avoided.



5.

According to the Macmillan dictionary website, \_\_\_\_\_ (or parenthesis in American English) are “used in writing or mathematics for showing that the piece of information or set of numbers between them can be considered separately.” However, this is also true of paired commas.

We therefore need to be more precise, adding that \_\_\_\_\_ are generally used for information which is more complex or further from the main topic of the sentence than information between paired commas usually is.

This tends to include examples and references to other parts of the page, such as “(see below)” and “(Fig. 2.3)”. In academic writing they are also of course used in referencing, enclosing the year of publication, or author and year of publication. As with paired commas, the general rule for information in brackets is that you should be understand the sentence even with those words removed.

6

A \_\_\_\_\_ should not be confused with a hyphen, which is shorter and is usually used between words.

A \_\_\_\_\_ has similar functions to brackets or paired commas (dividing extra information from the rest of the sentence) and one of the functions of a semicolon (connecting two clauses, often replacing a linking word, in a way which shows a closer connection that two sentences would).

In general, though, other punctuation marks like those just mentioned are preferred to dashes in academic writing.

## **Put the punctuation back into the examples**

### **Capital letters**

as well as the obvious uses starting sentences days of the week months proper nouns etc capital letters are used at the beginning of the main words of names of things such as books and articles by main words we mean not grammar words like determiners a an the etc prepositions words like to of and for or conjunctions such as and and but unless they are the first word in the title it is sometimes confusing whether something should be considered the name of something or simply a description for example central london would mean following the official description of that zones and two whereas central London would be a more general or personal definition

### **Colon**

the online macmillan dictionary gives examples of the use of a colon as before an explanation or list retrieved 12 May 2013 the oxford advanced learners dictionary 5<sup>th</sup> ed 1995 also mentions an example a ... summary of what precedes it or a contrasting idea and to this we can add the more common academic situations of long and complex lists usually presented with numbers or bullet points or divided by semicolons

### **Square brackets**

to quote wholesale from the chicago manual of style 16<sup>th</sup> edition square brackets in the united States usually just called brackets are used in scholarly prose mainly to enclose material usually added by someone other than the original writer that does not form a part of the surrounding text specifically ... square brackets enclose editorial interpolations explanations translations of foreign terms or corrections they can also be used surrounding three dots to show parts of the text which were edited out as in the quote given above



### Complete the defining your terms phrases

Put one word into each of the gaps below, from your memory or own ideas

#### Capital letters

As well \_\_\_\_\_ the obvious uses (starting sentences, days of the week, months, proper nouns, etc), capital letters are used at the beginning of the main words of names of things such as books and articles. \_\_\_\_\_ “main words”, we mean not grammar words like determiners (“a”, “an”, “the”, etc), prepositions (words like “to”, “of” and “for”) or conjunctions (such as “and” and “but”), \_\_\_\_\_ they are the first word in the title.

It is sometimes confusing \_\_\_\_\_ something should be considered the name of something or simply a description. For example, “Central London” \_\_\_\_\_ mean following the official description of that (zones and two), whereas “central London” would be a more general or personal definition.

#### Colon

The online Macmillan Dictionary \_\_\_\_\_ examples of the use of a colon as “before an explanation or list”. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (5<sup>th</sup> Ed., 1995) also \_\_\_\_\_ “an example, a [...] summary of what precedes it, or a contrasting idea”, and \_\_\_\_\_ this we can add the more common academic situations of long and complex lists.

#### Semicolon

The online Macmillan dictionary defines a semicolon \_\_\_\_\_ “a punctuation mark [...] that is used to separate words in a list, or two parts of a sentence that can be understood separately” (retrieved \_\_\_\_\_ <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/semicolon>, 10 May 2013), but the first part of the definition could easily refer \_\_\_\_\_ a comma. The difference \_\_\_\_\_ this case is that semicolons are used for more complex lists.

#### (Round) brackets

According to the Macmillan dictionary website, round brackets ( \_\_\_\_\_ parenthesis in American English) are “used \_\_\_\_\_ writing or mathematics for showing that the piece of information or set of numbers between them can be considered separately.” However, this is \_\_\_\_\_ true of paired commas. We therefore need to be \_\_\_\_\_ precise, adding \_\_\_\_\_ round brackets are generally used for information which is more complex or further from the main topic of the sentence.

#### Dash

A dash should not be confused \_\_\_\_\_ a hyphen, which is shorter and is usually used between words. A dash has similar functions \_\_\_\_\_ brackets or paired commas (dividing extra information from the rest of the sentence) and one of the functions of a semicolon (connecting two clauses, often replacing a linking word, in a way which shows a closer connection than two sentences would). \_\_\_\_\_ general, though, other punctuation marks like those just mentioned are preferred to dashes in academic writing.

*Check with the original texts. Many other answers are possible, so please check with your teacher before changing the words that you put.*

*Underline useful phrases for defining your terms in academic writing and presentations above.*