

Editing Checklist

Capitalization

- ⇐ First word of every sentence
- ⇐ Proper nouns (names of specific people, places, things, events)

Organization of Sentences

- ⇐ Complete sentences
- ⇐ No run-on sentences: make 2 simple sentences or add semicolon, comma plus conjunction, or transition
- ⇐ Variety of sentence structures (length, transitions, starts, endings)
- ⇐ Powerful verbs, specific nouns, colorful adjectives/adverbs (describe)
- ⇐ Introduce (transition and background) and cite sources

Punctuation

- ⇐ Ending punctuation mark matches the sentence type
statement (.) question (?) exclamation (!)
- ⇐ Commas, semicolons and colons used correctly (see back)
- ⇐ Dashes, parentheses and ellipses used correctly (see back)
- ⇐ Apostrophes used correctly (see back)
- ⇐ Dialogue punctuated correctly (Mary said, “I did my homework!”)

Spelling

- ⇐ Use spell check (read over to make sure it's the word you wanted)
- ⇐ Check for homonyms
(to/too/two, their/they're/there, your/you're, its/it's, than/then)

Comma ,

- Separates items in a list: *I ate chips, pretzels, cake and cookies.*
- Sets off introductory “bits”: *According to Dr. Cook, kids need more sleep.*
- Surrounds extra information (“interrupters”)
My brother, a junior in high school, is the star quarterback.
- Joins two complete thoughts with a conjunction
(must have a subject and verb on each side)
We won the game, so we brought home the trophy.

**** Do not use commas if each side cannot stand alone and make sense!**

I went to the store and bought milk.

Colon :

- Emphasizes a word, phrase, clause to explain or add impact
He has been a prisoner for a long time: thirty-three years.
- Introduces a list: *We bought snacks for the party: chips, pretzels, cake and cookies.*

Semicolon ;

- Joins two complete sentences without a conjunction
I like pizza; I eat it at least once a week.
- Separates groups of words that contain commas
We lived in Bolton, Vermont; Albany, New York; and York, Maine.

Apostrophe ’

- Shows possession or belonging with nouns: *The dog’s bone was buried.*
- Combines two words to form a contraction:
They’re my friends. (They are my friends.) It’s time to go. (It is time to go.)
Ann’s coming to the party. (Ann is coming to the party.)

**** Do not use apostrophes with plurals! Ex. *The dogs were barking.***

*****UNLESS it’s a possessive plural (belongs to many). Ex. *The students’ notebooks are kept in their cubbies.* (cubby → cubbies → drop “y” and add “-ies”)**

Dash -

- Shows that an idea has been interrupted by a new thought you want to emphasize:

People - mostly grownups - were always telling me to “do the right thing.”

- Used before the last part of a sentence for emphasis:

It was my first day at my new school - I was nervous.

Parentheses ()

- Provides a place to insert information that is extra or clarifies:

He finally chose a flavor (after taking five minutes to think).

Tim asked Dave (his closest friend for twenty years) to be his best man.

Ellipsis . . .

- Used to remove words that are less important in a quoted passage:

“Today, after hours of careful thought, we finally bought a new car.”

With ellipsis: “Today ... we finally bought a new car.”

- Express a pause, hesitation, change of mood, suspense, or thoughts trailing off in a sentence:

This was something I hadn’t thought about before ...He said, “I ... really don’t ... I’m not sure about this.”

When Punctuating Dialogue...

- Use quotes at the beginning and end of the spoken word.
- Each time a new character is speaking, create a new paragraph
- A comma separates the dialogue from the dialogue tag
- If your dialogue is a question or an exclamation, use a question mark or an exclamation point

Example:

“Hey,” Ms. Kovaliv said, “Who wants a school lunch today?”
“I do,” Mr. Eriksson said, “but only if they have PB&J.”
“Ok, one PB&J for Mr. Eriksson,” Ms. Kovaliv said.
“Can I get lunch too?” Ms. Smith asked.
“Sure!” Ms. Kovaliv said, “What do you want?”
“A Turkey sandwich, please,” replied Ms. Smith.