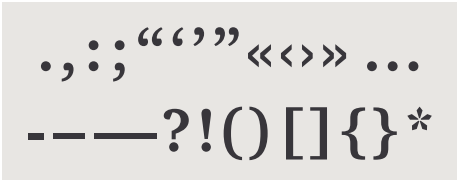




Punctuation

by Ilene Strizver

PUNCTUATION REFERS TO TYPOGRAPHIC SYMBOLS (AND SOMETIMES SPACES) USED TO CLARIFY the meaning of text, as well as to aid in reading comprehension. Some punctuation marks – such as commas, periods, dashes and colons – serve to divide text into phrases and sentences, directly impacting, and sometimes significantly altering, their meaning and interpretation. Without the benefit of correct punctuation, text may be subject to misinterpretation in dramatic, and even embarrassing, ways.



The most common punctuation marks are shown here.

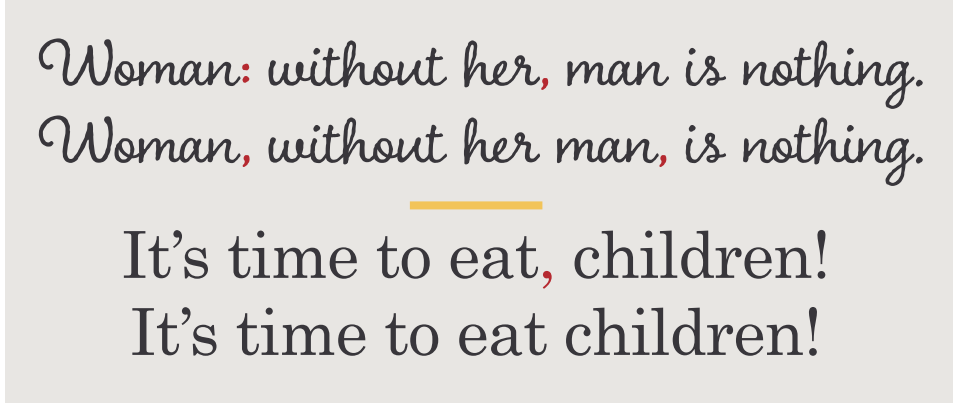
Most punctuation marks are designed to visually complement the typeface they are part of, in terms of weight, width, angle, and other design characteristics. Exceptions include periods, colons, dashes and hyphens, which are often basically the same design from typeface to typeface. While it is generally advisable to use the punctuation marks provided with a typeface, they can occasionally be enlarged or reduced, or even replaced with punctuation from another typeface, to meet the visual and/or design requirements of a specific project.

Although punctuation is used for generally similar purposes in other languages, differences in grammar and sentence structure can affect the way punctuation is applied. Style conven-

tions for punctuation usage can vary even between countries where the same language is spoken, such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. For this reason, whenever typesetting for other languages or countries, make

sure to familiarize yourself with their individual requirements.

When setting punctuation, be sure to use the typographically correct symbols. The wrong ones can turn up by default



Punctuation can drastically change the meaning of a sentence or phrase.



When punctuation is used as a design element, it can be scaled, colored, repositioned (as shown in the above quote by Matthew Carter), and even replaced with a different weight, version, or typeface design.

Punctuation (cont.)

when working with word-processing documents or other formats that do not automatically insert the correct symbols. This can include the use of typewriter quotes rather than smart quotes and apostrophes, as well as double hyphens instead of en or em dashes.

To avoid these unprofessional occurrences, research the best way to import text into your software of choice. Some applications can convert the typographically incorrect symbols into the right ones, minimizing the need to manually correct any wrong glyphs. This is especially important when you work with text or corrections copied from email or the Web.

It's essential to proofread final typeset copy carefully, to check that proper typographic conventions have been used consistently with regard to punctuation. It is risky to rely solely

on the client or even a professional proofreader to catch such errors – so include punctuation in your final review before passing your work on to the next set of eyes. ■

“English double quotes treatment.”
« French double quotes treatment. »
« Spanish double quotes treatment. »
„German double quotes treatment.“
„Polish double quotes treatment.”

Quotation treatments differ from country to country. Shown here are several common variations.