**APOSTROPHE**

We use the apostrophe in two ways:

1. To show possession; for example: *This is Miguel's car.*
2. To show missing letters when words are shortened: *He's got a really fast car.*

**NB:** the position of the apostrophe is determined by singular or plural:

**Example:**
- *Can you carry the girl's bags?*
- *Can you carry the girls' bags?*

**CAPITALS**

We capitalize:

- Proper nouns
- The first word in a sentence
- A person's title, when it comes before their name
- Every word in a title, except for *a, an, the, and, etc.*
- The first word in a quoted sentence: *Johan said: “Make sure you see the show.”*

**COLON**

Correct use of the colon can enrich your writing. Its function is to introduce something that follows:

- A list; for example: *We need some groceries: sugar, milk and bread.*
- A quotation; for example: *The professor stated: “This course is the best.”*
- A question; for example: *The question is: Do you think it will rain?*
- A conclusion; for example: *The conclusion was: “It’s all over.”*
- An example; for example: *There is one word you cannot overuse: please.*

We also use a colon:

- For formal salutations: *Prime Minister:    Dear Mrs Smith:    Honourable Members:*
- To separate the hour and minute(s) in a time notation; for example: *10:30 p.m.*
- To separate the chapter and verse in a Biblical reference; for example: *Matthew 1:6*

**COMMA**

Mastering the comma will improve your writing. Use it to:

- Itemize; for example: *Make sure you order some pens, binders, rulers and paper.*
- Separate persons and names: *Nazia, what did you say?*
- Add an additional thought; for example: *His advice was, generally speaking, encouraging.*
- Emphasize; for example: *I was scared, really scared.*
- Balance comparisons; for example: *The more I looked, the more I saw.*
**DASH AND HYPHEN**

A dash is used in the construction of **sentences**. A hyphen is used in the construction of **words**.

The dash can be used to:

- **Link**; for example: *The colours of the flag are very vibrant – orange, black and green.*
- **Pause**; for example: *She apologized with a smile – as usual.*
- **Interrupt**; for example “I have to tell you – and I apologize in advance – that she will not see you.”
- **Extend a sentence**; for example: *He walked in the room, looked around – and quietly left.*
- **Separate a list**; for example: *She threw the lot at me – plates, cups, sausages – and stormed out.*

**EXCLAMATION MARK**

Wise use of the exclamation mark can improve your writing. Overuse can kill it!!! We use it:

- **To command**; for example: *“Get out!”*
- **To convey irony or emphasize insults**; for example: *“That’ll be right!” or “You idiot!”*
- **To convey great surprise, anger or disgust**; for example: *“I won!” or “It’s filthy!”*

**QUOTATION MARK**

Double or single? The choice is yours, but having made your choice, stick with it: be consistent.

Quotation marks indicate direct speech: they show the exact words someone has spoken.

Example: *The professor said, “If your paper is late, it will be ungraded.”*

Don’t use quotation marks if you are paraphrasing what someone has said.

Example: *The professor said that if our papers are late, we won’t get a grade.*

Capitalize the first letter of the word that begins a quotation.

**SEMICOLON**

Some of the main uses of the semicolon include:

- **To join independent clauses** that are closely related; for example: *“I’m not going to help him; he never offers to help me.”*

- **To separate word groups** that already contain commas; for example: *The Student Council was composed of Abbas Mohammed, President; Sri Hartini, Vice President; James Taylor, Treasurer and Carolyn Johnson, Secretary.*

- **To emphasize opposite statements and contrast**; for example: *“I loved the car; pity about the colour.”*

Semicolons are often found in phrases that use transitional words, such as: **after all, as a result of, for example, however, in addition, in fact, therefore, and thus.** The sentence above could be improved to read: *“I’m not going to help him; after all, he never offers to help me.”*

**CONTACT THE STUDENT LEARNING CENTRE**

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK AN APPOINTMENT

Call: 905.721.8668 ext. 6578
Email: studentlearning@uoit.ca
Website: uoit.ca/studentlearning

North Oshawa Location: U5 Building
Downtown Oshawa Location: 61 Charles St.