PUNCTUATION

• Clarifies structure.
• Clarifies meaning.
• Exists for emphasis, focus, purpose, pace, rhythm.
• Should seem natural, and go unnoticed.
• Consistency is crucial.
Dear John
I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy. Will you let me be yours?

Gloria

(Gloria Rosenthal, *Games Magazine*, 1984)
CATEGORIES

Stoppers: full stop or period, comma
Linkers: semicolon, colon, dash
Intruders: comma pair, dash pair, bracket pair
Intoners: exclamation and question marks

OTHER MARKS

• Apostrophes
• Hyphens
• Quotation marks
• Slash
• Ellipsis
The full stop, or period, is used to signify the end of a sentence and to make certain abbreviations, but you need to check these, because usage differs.

"No iron can strike the heart with as much force as a period in exactly the right place."

Isaac Babel
FULL STOPS/PERIODS

“
That sentence appears in a short story called ‘Guy de Maupassant’. Which is appropriate, because that is exactly how de Maupassant wrote—sentences that advanced the narrative, paragraphs with punch, stories that stopped on a dime.

Jesse Kornbluth

“

COMMAS

• After an introductory sentence element:
  
  However hard I try, I still can’t get everything right.

• To prevent over-reading:

  The trip had been fun for her frame of mind was always good heading off for a holiday.
COMMAS

• To separate main clauses—the comma FANBOYS:
  The steering was stiff, but the car cruised like a dream.
• To substitute for the word ‘and’:
  The shiny, silver coin
• To set off non-essential information:
  Our car, a red sedan, won.

THE OXFORD/HARVARD SERIAL COMMA

Remember to check your grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Jane bought books, coffee, and milk.

The commas separate the three items in the series.
MIS-USING COMMAS

Northern Reef Spotted Cod, Beer, Batter, Chips = $17.50

Don’t put a comma between a subject and its verb, unless you insert other words.

The cat, sat on the mat. X

Cats, who are friendly creatures, love milk. √

SEMICOLONS

• Separate closely related independent clauses.

• Separate items in a list in which at least one item has internal punctuation.
“To write is human; to edit is divine.”

Stephen King
On Writing

“Please put it in the trash can; that’s good news for everyone.”
SEMICOLONS

Remember to check your grammar, especially agreement of subjects and verbs; your spelling, especially tricky words like 'liaison'; and your punctuation, especially your use of the apostrophe.

COLONS

ANNOUNCE

- an explanation
- a clarification
- an interpretation
- an amplification
- an illustration.

- They introduce a list.
- They introduce a quote.
COLON

Pancho Villa allegedly said: ‘Don’t let it end like this, tell them I said something’. (UK end punctuation)
Pancho Villa allegedly said: ‘Don’t let it end like this, tell them I said something.’ (USA end punctuation)

Only two things in life really matter: dark chocolate and light chocolate.

DASHES

There are two kinds of dashes:
The em dash (—)
Mild sweetness, creamy centre, made in Belgium—my criteria for confectionery are steep.

The en dash (–)
1950–2014
COMMA PAIR

• A pair of commas can be used in place of parentheses.

*I would have ordered calamari, so long as it was fresh, but it wasn’t on the menu.*

DASH PAIR

• A pair of em dashes can be used in place of parentheses.

*We knew that we—even with our training—were no match for them.*
ROUND BRACKETS

- Round brackets (parentheses) () are used to insert information into a sentence.

  Seven sailors (of Madagascan origin) were hired for the voyage.

  We then travelled to Omsk. (Recall that Omsk is a city in south-western Siberia.)

SQUARE BRACKETS

  They went from there to Magdalen college [at Oxford University].

  Gladstone was a man of great importance [sic].