

## **PUNCTUATION GUIDE**

“Everyone has always regarded any usage but his own as either barbarous or pedantic.” (Evelyn Waugh)

“Punctuation is a means, and its end is: helping the reader to hear, to follow.”  
(Thomas McCormack)

The main purpose of punctuation is to make the meaning of a written passage clear to the person who is reading it. Punctuation is not optional, but is essential to the text. Poor punctuation leads to ambiguity, inaccurate information and ineffective communication.

However, remember that punctuation is as much art as science. Rules may be broken, if that suits the writer's purpose. These little chapters are based on what I learned at school, some years' experience as a proofreader, and a review of the relevant literature.

There are many good books about this subject. (See References). This document describes the main elements of punctuation, with examples. There are some excellent websites with punctuation exercises: just follow the links.

These are the principal punctuation items:

1. The Comma
2. The Full Stop
3. The Hyphen
4. The Semicolon
5. The Colon
6. The Dash
7. The Apostrophe
8. Quotation Marks
9. The Question Mark
10. The Exclamation Mark
11. Parentheses (Brackets)
12. The Ellipsis (...)
13. Capital Letters
14. Underlining and Italics
15. Paragraphs
16. Abbreviations
17. Numbers.
18. The Virgule