

## Using the Virgule

The virgule has four specific uses in punctuation.

1) To separate parts of an **extended date**.

Example: The 1994/95 basketball season.

The 1914/18 War.

2) To represent the word **per** in measurements:

Example: 186,000 mi./sec. (miles per second)

3) To stand for the word **or** in the expression **and/or**. (Though not considered standard, it can sometimes stand for the word **or** in other expressions.)

Example: Using the pass/fail option backfired on her; she could have scored an A.

The slash here can be translated as *or*, and should not be used where the word *or* could not be used in its place. To avoid gender problems with pronouns, some writers use he/she, his/her, and him/her, but this always looks clumsy to me. Others prefer either to pluralize when possible and appropriate (to *they*, *their*, *them*) or to use *he or she*, etc. instead. Notice there is no space between the slash and the letters on either side of it.

4) To separate **lines of poetry** that are quoted in a run-on fashion in the text. This way of quoting poetry is limited to four or five lines of verse, within the normal flow of text. Note that there should be a following space when the slash is used to indicate a line-break in quoted poetry:

Example: "And up and down the people go,/ Gazing where the lilies blow/ Round an island there below,/ The island of Shalott."

"The woods are lovely, dark, and deep/ but I have promises to keep."

When using slashes in a **Uniform Resource Locator** (URL) for a World Wide Web address (<http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>), be sure not to include spaces and in particular do not confuse the slash with its backward cousin, \, which is used as a path separator in Windows (for example, c:\program files\Adobe).