

Metalanguage Quiz #2: Punctuation

(20 points + 1 bonus)

Part 1: Punctuation vocabulary

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Use a (1) _____ (US) or a (2) _____ (UK) at the end of a sentence.

Example: Please don't call it a "dot" when you use it in this particular meaning.

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Use a (3) _____ to begin a list of items, or between a full sentence and a related quotation.

In South Texas there are only two seasons: hot, and extremely hot.

;

Use a (4) _____ between two complete sentences which are logically related in meaning.

My neighbor is an English teacher; I don't know how he can afford such a nice car.

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— —

An (5) _____ shows that some letters are left out of a word; we also use it to show possession.

I can see Radka's car in the garage, so she's probably at home.

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— —

A (6) _____ connects two separate words to make a new word.

It broke my heart to learn that eight-year-old boys were forced to join the army and fight in the war.

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A (7) _____ creates the feeling of a pause which is longer and more dramatic than a comma. Its use is never required—it's always a matter of the author's style choice.

Nothing is better than coffee—except more coffee.

...

An (8) _____ is three (or sometimes four) dots together. It's used to show that the speaker's words are trailing off into silence, or, in a quotation, it shows that some words have been left out.

Winston Churchill said, "We shall prove ourselves once more able to...ride out the storm of war."

() []

The round ones () are called (9) _____ (US) or (10) _____ (UK); they are used to set one thought "aside" from the rest of a sentence, or to set off a citation. The other kind [] are usually called (11) _____; one common use of these is to show when the original words of a quotation have been altered or translated in some way by the author.

Winston Churchill (who was the UK's Prime Minister at the time) said, "We [the British people] shall prove ourselves once more able to...ride out the storm of war."

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The (12) _____ has various uses; it is often used at the end of a sentence, to refer the reader to a footnote.

Václav Havel is one of the only people in history to have been president of two different countries.*

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The most common use for a (13) _____ these days is in an internet URL, but it can also be used in a sentence to show two or more roughly equal options. And when you are quoting from poetry or songs, it's used to represent line breaks in the poem.

John Lennon once sang, "Imagine all the people / living life in peace."

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An (14) _____ goes at the end of a sentence to show extreme emphasis.

Don't overuse these!!!! It will make you look unprofessional, or even insane!!!!!!

Part 2: Some common punctuation problems

Each number below represents ONE word, which may be repeated several times!

Example sentence A:

Joe threw the ball it hit the window. (X)

This is not a correct sentence in English. It's an example of what we call a (15) _____ sentence. According to the Grammarly website, this is "when two complete sentences are squashed together without using a coordinating conjunction or proper punctuation." It's also sometimes called a *fused sentence*.

Example sentence B:

Joe threw the ball, it hit the window. (X)

Sorry, but this is still not correct; this is a *comma splice*, which is usually considered a kind of (15) _____ sentence. Putting a comma between the two complete sentences doesn't help—a comma isn't "strong" enough to separate them.

There are three basic ways of fixing this kind of incorrect sentence. I'll show you an example of each of these fixes. Based on each example, please write one imperative sentence ("Use this"; "Do that") below it which *explains how the sentence has been fixed in the example*.

16. Joe threw the ball. It hit the window. (✓)

17. Joe threw the ball, and it hit the window. (✓)

18. Joe threw the ball; it hit the window. (✓)

Example sentence C:

I think, that Joe is the best teacher in the world. (X)

Even though the opinion expressed in this sentence is absolutely, objectively correct, the sentence itself is not written correctly. There should NOT be a comma between “think” and “that.” Why not?

To know when to use commas in English, it might help to understand the concept of **essential** and **non-essential** (or unessential, or inessential) clauses. Okay, first, what’s a clause? You can think of a clause as a part of a sentence that expresses a “complete” thought. More technically, it has a subject (or a pronoun), and a predicate (a predicate is words that say something further about the subject). I’m simplifying this because it’s actually very complicated. If you want to get deeper into this and learn more about these linguistic terms—there’s Google.

Think of an **essential** clause as one that gives information we need in order to understand the most basic meaning and purpose of the sentence. An **non-essential** clause gives added, extra information—it’s nice that we get this information, but without it, the sentence would still fulfill its basic communicative purpose.

Here’s the basic rule to remember when you are considering whether a comma is correct: First, notice where the main subject of the sentence is. If a comma appears in between the subject and **essential** information, you probably need to take out that comma. It’s probably a bad comma, because it’s “cutting off” the essential info and dividing it from the subject.

For example: In sentence C, there are two clauses, “I think,” and “that Joe is the best teacher in the world.” In between is a comma. Imagine that the comma is a knife, cutting off the words that come after it. What’s left once you cut off those words? Only “I think.” Does “I think” express the basic meaning of the sentence? Of course not—the **essential** information, the main idea that the sentence is meant to express, is missing. So, don’t put a comma there.

The word **“that”** should set off an anti-comma alarm for you! In general, we don’t use a comma with “that” (after phrases such as “I think that” or “She said that”). That’s because what comes after “that” is almost always **essential** info. This is the exact opposite of the rule in Czech, unfortunately.

Example sentences D and E: (✓)

My girlfriend, who lives in Prague, is coming to visit me this weekend. I miss her so much.

My girlfriend who lives in Prague is coming to visit me this weekend. I hope she doesn’t meet my girlfriend who lives in Brno.

I like to use these two (correct) sentences to show students the difference between essential and non-essential clauses. What are the differences between the two sentences? Why do I use commas in the first but not in the second?

For one point each, finish the sentences below with information that is true for you, and make sure to punctuate your sentences correctly.

19. My parents used to tell me that _____

20. Now that I’m older I can see that _____

Bonus point:

Write out the following figure in numerals, using correct English punctuation:

Eighty-six thousand five hundred dollars and thirty-two cents

