EPISODE 207

English Punctuation Marks

Full transcript · mini-story · vocabulary review

Hi, everybody! I am Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of SpeakEnglishPodcast.com. My mission is to help you speak English fluently.

Today I am talking about **punctuation**. :)

Ok! Today I am talking about **punctuation**. By this word, I mean the different spelling **marks** used when writing. These are the main ones.

Period or full stop . - is a **punctuation** mark that we use to show the end of a sentence.

Commas , are the ideal punctuation mark to divide sentences or indicate when to pause.

Apostrophes - we use them to identify something that belongs to someone or to show a letter or multiple letters are missing from a word.

Colons : are used to precede a list of items, a quotation, or an expansion or explanation.

Semicolons ; indicate a pause, usually between two main sentences, longer than that indicated by a **comma**.

Ellipsis ... We use them to show that one or more words have been removed from a quote and create suspense by adding a pause before the end of the sentence. And we can also use it to show the end of a thought.

Quotation marks " " Inform the reader that you have used written material from other sources or direct speech.

Question **marks** ? Indicate that the speaker is asking a question. They're used at the end of the question (or interrogative) sentences.

Exclamation **marks** ! Can change a sentence's meaning and tone. They still end a sentence, but they can add emotion, whether excitement, anger, or nervousness!

Round brackets ( ) are used similarly to commas when we want to add an explanation, an afterthought, or a comment related to our primary line of thought but different from it.

Square brackets or brackets [ ] We use them for special purposes, such as technical manuals.

Hyphen - we use it to join words and separate syllables of a single word.

Punctuations can be very confusing, especially if you don't know where to place them, and can change the entire meaning of what you want to say.

Let's look at some examples of situations when we do not use punctuation marks properly:

#1 Woman Without Man

A teacher wrote the following sentence on the board and asked his class to punctuate it:

Woman without her man is nothing.

Half of the class punctuated the sentence in the following way:

Woman: without her, man is nothing.

The other half of the class responded with the following:

Woman, without her man, is nothing.

Fascinating how punctuation can change the meaning of a sentence entirely.

Another example:

#2 Your granny's life depends upon it!

Here, commas matter.

Let's eat granny!

Or

Let's eat, granny!

See the difference?

#3 Eat your dinner.

You say to a child: Eat your dinner!

You say to a cow: Eat! You're dinner!

Here, apostrophes matter.

#4 I'm sorry I love you.

When you are in a terrible fight, you might say a horrible thing like this one:

I'm sorry I love you.

And when you want to make up again, you can say:

I'm sorry; I love you.

Semicolons matter! :)

#5 I find inspiration in cooking my family and my dog.

That sounds crazy! Right?

We need some commas here!

Let's hear it again:

I find inspiration in cooking, my family, and my dog.

That's much better!

Now, let's practice.

Mini-Story

Speaking Practice

Answer the questions aloud with short and quick responses. Repeat the Mini-Story several times to improve your speaking and listening.

When Tom sent written messages, misunderstandings always occurred.

Were there sometimes misunderstandings?
No, not sometimes. There were always misunderstandings whenever Tom sent written messages.

When were there misunderstandings?
When Tom sent written messages, text messages.

What was there?
Misunderstandings. There were misunderstandings.

The problem was that Tom never used any punctuation marks.

The problem was that he never used any punctuation marks?
Yes. That was the problem. He didn't use any punctuation marks.

The problem was that he didn't use road signs?
No, no. Not road signs. Punctuation marks.

Who didn't use punctuation marks?
Tom. Tom didn't use punctuation marks.

Tom started using punctuation marks, but he put them all at the end of the message.

Did Tom start using punctuation marks?
Yes, he started using punctuation marks. He started using them.

Did he use them correctly?
No, he didn't use them correctly. He used them incorrectly.

Tom's plan made the situation worse, not better.

What did it make better?
Nothing. It didn't make anything better. It made the situation worse.

What made the situation worse?
Tom's plan. Tom's plan made the situation worse.

In the end, Tom, tired, started sending video and audio voice mails instead of written messages.

Was Tom tired?
Yes, he was tired.

What did he start doing?
He started sending videos and voice audios instead of written messages.

Instead of what?
Written messages. He started sending videos and audios instead of messages.

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 **punctuation** marks used to organize and clarify written language.	05 **colon** a mark used before a list, explanation, or quotation.
02 **period / full stop** the mark used at the end of a statement.	06 **semicolon** a mark joining closely related independent clauses.
03 **comma** a mark used to separate ideas or show a pause.	07 **question mark** the mark placed at the end of a direct question.
04 **apostrophe** a mark showing possession or missing letters.	08 **quotation marks** marks placed around exact spoken or written words.

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