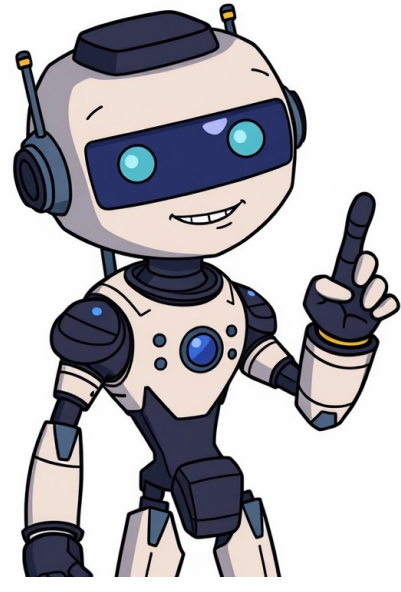


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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Browse#aabbcddoeffghhijjkkllmmnnoooppqrrsstuuuvvwxxyzzAboutCareersContact usCookies, terms, & privacyHelpFollow usGet the Word of the Day every day! 2025 Dictionary.com, LLC Explore the meaning, origin, and various uses of the number sign (#), also known as the hash symbol or pound sign. Discover its significance in mathematics, social media, and computing. The number sign (#), also known as the hash symbol, pound sign, octothorpe, or hashtag, is a typographical symbol used for a variety of purposes in different contexts.EtymologyThe term pound sign stems from its original use in shorthand for pounds weight (lb.). In this context, its a stylized representation of the abbreviation for pound from Latin libra pondo. The term hash symbol comes from the computing context where it is often used. Octothorpe is believed to be coined by Bell Labs employees in the 1960s, though the exact origin is unclear.Usage NotesTelephony: Commonly used on touch-tone phones as an operator control key.Social Media: Used as a hashtag to label and search topics (e.g., #travel).Computing: Used in various programming languages for comments or special functions.Mathematics: Used to signify a number.SynonymsHash symbolPound signHashtagOctothorpeSharp symbol (limited to certain musical notations, though different in appearance)AntonmysSymbols with no pertinent opposition but could be contrasted as:Dollar sign (\$)At sign (@)Ampersand (&)Hashtag: A word or phrase preceded by the number sign (#) used in social media to categorize posts.Comment: A part of code in programming languages often marked with the number sign to indicate non-executable lines intended for explanations.Exciting FactsHistorical Use: The symbol was used by scribes in the Middle Ages, adapting from the Latin term libra pondo to indicate weight.Trending Uses: The hashtag became a significant aspect of internet culture, first suggested by Chris Messina in 2007.Standardization: The number signs place on keyboards and its digital use have been standardized largely because of its utility and versatility.Quotations from Notable WritersThe truth is the # symbol, or hash, has become such an everyday part of our lives that its difficult to imagine a world without it. - Steven Petrow, USA TodayUsage ParagraphThe number sign (#) is omnipresent in our modern digital world. When used as a hashtag, it facilitates navigation through vast amounts of information on social media by categorizing discussions under a single discernible mark. In the realm of computing and programming, it is indispensable when annotating code, making it easier for developers to collaborate effectively. On old touch-tone telephones, pressing the pound key was the universal way to perform certain operations like ending a call or telephonic interactions. The symbols ability to morph seamlessly across sectors highlights its functional elasticity.Suggested LiteratureThe Elements of Typographic Style by Robert Bringhurst - A comprehensive guide to typography and symbols.Hashtag: How the # symbol invented the hashtag changed the social media landscape (various authors) - Explore the journey of the hashtag and its impact.The Unicode Standard, Version 13.0 - For those interested in the computing and encoding side of symbols.Quizzes## What is another name for the number sign (#)? - [] Ampersand - [] At sign - [x] Hash symbol - [] Tilde > **Explanation:** The number sign is also known as the hash symbol. ## In social media, what do we call a word or phrase preceded by the number sign (#)? - [] Pound word - [x] Hashtag - [] Mention - [] Trend > **Explanation:** A word or phrase preceded by the number sign in social media is called a hashtag. ## Which symbol can be used to denote pounds in weight? - [x] # - [] @ - [] & - [] ~ > **Explanation:** The number sign (#) was historically used to denote pounds in weight. ## Where did the term 'octothorpe' reportedly originate? - [] Unicode Consortium - [] IBM - [x] Bell Labs - [] MIT > **Explanation:** The term 'octothorpe' is believed to have been coined by employees at Bell Labs in the 1960s. ## Which of the following is NOT a function of the number sign in computing? - [] Indicates non-executable comments - [x] Executes code directly - [] Defines macros in programming languages - [] Denotes special functions in specific contexts > **Explanation:** The number sign typically does not execute code directly but instead is used to denote comments, define macros, and other demarcations. Sunday, September 21, 2025 From Our AI Discovery Engine This entry was identified and drafted by our AI Discovery Engine, a tool we use to find new and emerging terms before they appear in traditional dictionaries. This preliminary version is now awaiting review by our human editors. Think you can help? Found a better citation or example? We welcome community feedback. For formal academic use, please await the final editor-approved version. Punctuation marks are a set of signs and different symbols used in written language to clarify what, when, and how things are being said. This guide covers everything you need to know about punctuation marks and how to use them correctly. Use our tips and helpful charts to learn what each punctuation mark looks like and more! Youll be a punctuation pro in no time!The different types of punctuation are vast, so well cover them in this chart with deeper explanations to follow.1. Period (.)The period is one of the most common punctuation marks. Anyone knows the answer to What is a period used for? because its simply for ending declarative sentences. You can also use it to finish imperative sentences.A period also indicates complete sentences. Using it to separate sentences helps make your writing clearer. Here are some examples:Please take care of the shoes Im lending you.Shes going to the gym tomorrow.Monte Carlo is my comfort movie every time I feel lonely.Youll also find a period in abbreviations, as in Mrs. and Mr.2. Question Mark (?)In grammar, a question mark is a familiar punctuation used to end interrogative sentences. Its known for being a one-job punctuation mark because it simply communicates questions. These sentences can be in the form of a direct question or an indirect question.A direct question is an interrogative sentence that asks an ordinary question. For example:How does it feel to be living my dream?What are the parts of a plant cell?Why do I have to retake this subject?An indirect question is a more polite way of making a request or asking for information. For example:Could you give me your mobile number for future transactions?Do you know where I can find Mr. Johnson?Would you mind grabbing a few vegetables before you go home?3. Exclamation Point (!)One of the most basic punctuation marks is the exclamation point. The punctuation symbol for this is a straight vertical line with a period at the bottom. Use it at the end of an exclamatory sentence to show strong emotion.Examples:Happy birthday, Emma!Ugh! I cant stop myself from spending money on books.Wow! The sunset is breathtaking.4. Comma (,)(One common cause of grammar mistakes in American English is the lack of commas. Use the comma to separate ideas and independent clauses. Its usually found before a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).You can also use the comma to set off nouns as direct addresses. You need to include this punctuation mark, whether the name is at the beginning or end of the sentence.Examples:Millie, you look stunning in your beaded dress.This house used to be orange and blue, but they changed it to lilac and yellow.The partner I have chosen is you, Jacob.5. Colon (:)A colon is used to introduce additional information. It can also connect clauses like an em dash and a comma. Youll find this punctuation mark in any kind of writing. For example-Meg has three options after college: apply as an instructional designer, learning engineer, or curriculum specialist.Somewhat, everyone forgot the important announcement: Jade and Ryan are getting married.Colons also have other uses on a regular basis:I started working at 8:30 p.m.The correct rice-to-water ratio is 1:2.6. Semicolon (;)Like commas, parentheses, and em dashes, a semicolons function is separating elements within sentences. Use it to join a clause and a larger clause without a conjunction.Example:Lets go to the library to finish the essay; Tuesday would be great.7. Hyphen (-)In the English language, hyphens are used to form compound words. Another usage of the hyphen is to divide a word where theres not enough space for the whole word. You can also use it to avoid the awkward doubling of vowels in a compound term.Examples:The president-elect withdrew his candidacy after being exposed for plunder.The correct spelling of goodbye is g-o-o-d-b-y-e-y-e.My mother has a well-stocked pantry.8. Dash(There are types of dashes to consider.En Dash (The en dash is one of the different types of dashes used to indicate a range in time periods, distance, and more.Examples:Please refer to pages 60/73.The conference will take place on July 15/17. Some people also use it to separate complex compound words. The symbol is longer than a hyphen but shorter than an em dash. The odd name comes from the simple fact that it has the same width as the lowercase letter n.Examples:Incorrect: Chicago-New York train (hyphen)Correct: Chicago-New York train (en dash)Incorrect: Shes a National Book Award-winning author.Correct: Shes a National Book Awardwinning author.One of the most common punctuation mistakes we make is getting confused between a hyphen and a dash. Note that the en dash doesnt join compound words the way hyphens do.En Dash (An en dash is one of the three kinds of dashes that functions like a comma, a colon, or parentheses in introducing a clause. It can separate independent clauses from subordinate clauses to help a writer expand on an idea. Some people consider the en dash as more suitable for informal writing. But youll find this double hyphen in different types, even in the most formal writing.Example:The operating hours9 a.m. to 9 p.m. are the best choice for this business and its customers.9. Brackets []Square brackets are rarely found in any piece of writing. But you use them to clarify information within quotes. In short, its like parentheses for direct quotations to make the quote clearer. For example:According to the author, grammar resources [should be] widely accessible to language learners.10. Braces { }Curly brackets, braces, or squiggly brackets are used to group a set. Theyre commonly found in mathematical sets.Example:I already have some venue options {Pier Sixty, Tribeca Rooftop, The Foundry} for the wedding.11. Parentheses (In English grammar, parentheses are used to add information to a sentence. Such a piece of information may not fit in the sentence. For example:The familys arrival (which I only learned about now) was shocking.I swear I saw the ghost (Do you believe in them?) during our stay at the old house.12. Apostrophe (')There is a wide variety of apostrophe rules you need to follow. First, you need to use the apostrophe in contractions. A contraction is when two words are shortened by omitting one or more letters to form one word. For example:Do notdont.I amIm.She willshell.Another one of the apostrophes functions is to show the possessive form of a noun.Examples:That bag is Cornelias.Wills dedication is impressive.A note on apostrophes is that you can also use them to form the plurals of letters and numbers.Examples:Youll also find the apostrophe in foreign languages. French uses it in articles when a vowel has been dropped.A common misuse of the apostrophe is placing it before an S to make nouns plural. Heres an example:Incorrect: I ate bacons for breakfast.Correct: I ate bacons for breakfast.13. Quotation Marks ()The common quotation marks or inverted commas are used to make direct quotations or repetitions of someones exact words or famous quotes.The two types of quotation marks are single quotes (') and the more common double quotation marks ("). Single quotation marks are used to enclose a quote within a quote, while double quotation marks are used to indicate a direct quote. Punctuation styles differ between British English and American English. In American English, periods and commas are placed inside the quotations, even if theyre not in the original material, while British English places them outside quotations.Here are some examples of sentences.The teacher told me, You are one of my best students. I said to my mother, Thomas Edison once said, Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent inspiration.14. Ellipses (The ellipses are a writing tool used for indicating words removed from a quote. It shows sentence endings while letting the reader know its incomplete.Example:I cant believe it, she whispered, her voice trembling with disbelief and excitement. This is truly a dream come true!Typographical marks are punctuation marks 2.0. Theyre common symbols we use in typography that help with legibility and accessibility. Here are some of the most popular ones:1. Asterisk (*)The asterisk is a symbol that looks like a star. Its used to show a footnote in formal writing, primarily scientific and academic writing.Example:25% of the respondents prefer lavender over mint.*According to survey data from the Essential Oils Center.2. Ampersand (&)The ampersand replaces the word and, but it is not encouraged by different style guides. Use it within specific formal references like official names.Examples:His fianc gave her a Tiffany & Co ring as a birthday gift.The law firm that Justine sought help from is Miller & Associates. They gave a short performance at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.3. Bullet Point (The bullet point is used for creating lists. Example:For this project, you will need:Fabric of your choice.Peltex.Fusible fleece.Washable ink marker.Coordinating thread.Sewing needle.4. Pound Symbol (#)The pound sign is the punctuation mark for marking the number of something. Its also now used for hashtags online.Its not to be confused with the pound symbol for the British currency. The British pound symbol represented the libra pondo, the unit of measurement for weight in the Roman Empire.Examples:Candace is a #1 Internationally Bestselling Author.The hashtags #writing and #publishing are trending.5. Tilde (~)One of the many forms of punctuation you wont always see is the tilde. Previously known as the twiddle or squiggle, this characters informal usage means about or approximately. It also functions as an accent mark in Portuguese and Spanish words.Example:They plan to visit So Paulo this summer, but the crowd is giving them second thoughts.I think Jane and I met ~3 years ago.6. Backslash (\\)You wont find the backslash in letter writing, business writing, and other forms of writing. This punctuation mark is used for programming or coding, so dont mix it with the forward slash.However, if youre writing fiction and your character is coding in the story, and you want to include it, then a backslash is important. The same applies to non-fiction, especially if youre writing about coding.7. At Symbol (@)The @ symbol is a substitute for the word at, but only for informal writing. Its only purpose in informal writing is when youre writing email addresses.Example:C @ the mail.My email address is 8. Caret Symbol (^)The caret symbol may indicate an exponent if you cant use the superscript function on the computer. You can also use it in proofreading.Example:9. Pipe Symbol (|)The pipe symbol has no real place in fiction writing. Its function lies in the disciplines of computing, physics, and math. But, its often used stylistically in online copywriting.Example:Candace Osmond | Bestselling AuthorPunctuation marks are the signs and symbols we use in writing to clarify the meaning behind our writing. They separate sentences and their parts to help the reader understand exactly what were saying, when were saying it, and how were saying it.Think of grammar as the conductor of the language orchestra. Its the rulebook, the guidelines, and the how-to for arranging phrases, clauses, and words in any language. Now, if grammar is the conductor, punctuation is the sheet music.Punctuations are the symbols we scatter across the written word to create harmony and avoid chaos. In simpler terms, punctuation keeps everything from becoming a word jumble.The role of punctuation characters in English is far more important than you think. These little symbols wear the crown in the kingdom of English. Theyre not just pretty faces; theyre sentence-structuring, meaning-clarifying powerhouses.Punctuation takes your reader by the hand and tells them when to stop, pause, speed up, read with a certain emphasis, and more. They help us tell the difference between a question and a statement or a reply and a thought.The history of punctuation goes something like this: Once upon a time, in ancient Greece, circa the 3rd century B.C.E., a clever librarian named Aristophanes thought, Hmm, we need a system to tell us when to take a breath while reading these scrolls out loud. So, he came up with punctuation.As folks started reading and writing more, thanks to advances in education and the spread of religion, punctuation went viral. Fast forward to the 9th century, and youd see punctuation hobnobbing with words everywhere, becoming an indispensable player in the game of communication.Punctuation is always evolving because the way we communicate is constantly changing. Did you know that the exclamation mark was originally called the note of admiration until the 15th century?Today, in our digital age, punctuation has evolved even further. We now use punctuation marks to convey tone and even combine them to create emotions.Informal punctuation marks are the characters we use in casual communication, like texting or instant messaging. Theyre not typically used in everyday formal writing, but theyre commonly recognized and used in casual and informal writing and digital communication.The English language has 14 main punctuation marks:PeriodCommaColonSemicolonDashHyphenApostropheQuestion markExclamation pointQuotation marksBracketsParenthesesBracesEllipsisPunctuation marks are versatile and adapt to all forms of writing. They can lend rhythm and flow to poetry, help us distinguish formal from informal English, and even inject a touch of personality into casual text and email exchanges.Punctuation in poetry helps to control the reading speed and adds to the overall beat of the piece. Periods create full stops, letting the reader pause, and commas create minor pauses.Apostrophes show possession or create contractions, and dashes can signal abrupt thought changes.A great example of this is Emily Dickinson, whos known for her unique use of dashes in her poems. In her piece A Bird Came Down the Walk, the dashes create pauses and add emphasis to certain parts of the poem.In formal English, punctuation marks adhere strictly to the rules. Periods, commas, semicolons, and colons are meticulously used to give structure and clarity. Formal English also demands the use of an Oxford comma in a list of three or more items. However, this also depends on the style guide you use. But informal English has a looser approach. Colloquial language usually takes liberties with punctuation for stylistic purposes, like how you might see a string of exclamation points or question marks for emphasis.The combination of ?! or !? is an example of an interrobang. We use it to express shock or disbelief in the form of a question. So instead of it being a simple inquiry, it comes across as more of an exclamation of surprise or disbelief.Informal: Youre moving to Japan?Formal: Are you moving to Japan?Its popular in informal writing, like text messages or social media, but isnt typically used in formal writing.The hedera punctuation mark (is a lovely piece of flourish used in early printed books, which is also called a fleuron. It doesnt have a specific grammatical function but was often used to mark paragraph breaks. Nowadays, its more of a typographical curiosity than a functional punctuation mark.Punctuation marks are integral to effective communication in English. Here are a few tips and tricks to master them.End your sentences with a period, question mark, or exclamation point.Commas are needed to separate items in a list or clauses in a sentence. Use a semicolon to connect closely related sentences.You need a colon to introduce a list or explanation.Use quotation marks around direct quotes or titles.Always use an apostrophe to indicate possession or contraction. Use hyphens to create compound words and dashes to indicate a range, pause, or abrupt change.Printable worksheets and charts are great resources if you want to practice using punctuation marks. They usually have visual guides and opportunities to apply what youve learned.Here are a few examples of what youd use in exercises for different grade levels:Elementary: Identify and use periods, question marks, and exclamation points in a sentence.Middle School: Use commas correctly in a series and separate clauses.High School: Practice using semi-colons, colons, and dashes in complex sentences.Punctuation can dramatically impact the meaning and tone of your sentences. Heres how to sidestep some common pitfalls.1. Missing Oxford comma: The Oxford comma is the comma used right before the coordinating conjunction (usually and or or) in a list of three or more items. Its absence can sometimes create confusion.Incorrect usage: I love my parents, Lady Gaga and Bigfoot. Without the Oxford comma, it seems like the parents are Lady Gaga and Bigfoot!Correct usage: I love my parents, Lady Gaga, and Bigfoot.2. Misplaced apostrophes: Apostrophes can indicate possession or contractions, but they are often misused. Its is a contraction for it is or it has, while its is a possessive pronoun.Incorrect usage: Its important to feed a dog its food.Correct usage: Its important to feed a dog its food.3. Excessive exclamation points: We use these to add drama or urgency. However, too many exclamation points can lessen the impact you want to make and also look unprofessional.Incorrect usage: I got the publishing job!!Correct usage: I got the publishing job!4. Run-on sentences: These happen when two or more independent clauses are connected without proper punctuation.Incorrect usage: I love reading and my favorite genre is Fantasy Romance.Correct usage: I love reading, and my favorite genre is Fantasy Romance.Practice every chance you get: The more you write and edit, the better youll become.Utilize writing aids: Tools like Grammarly are awesome for spotting errors and suggesting improvements.Read whenever you can: You learn faster when you see proper punctuation being used.Every writer is unique and learns in different ways. What works for you might not work for others. But there are some tried and true methods of practicing your punctuation and writing skills online. Here are just a few key ones to consider:Online quizzes: Grammarist has a ton of punctuation tests, but there are many others, too. Punctuation tests can be reused whenever you need to brush up on your skills.Writing platforms: Several platforms, like Medium and Wattpad, let you publish your writing and get feedback from others. The feedback comes from other writers, editors, and professionals in the industry, but also general readers. Use these platforms to hone your skills and start generating income from your work.Educational websites: Grammarist offers comprehensive lessons on punctuation. Education.com also has a plethora of online games and apps you can get to practice and learn better punctuation skills.Punctuation tools are like digital aids that help you find and correct any punctuation errors in your work. They can usually be downloaded and integrated right into programs like Google Docs and Microsoft Word. Grammarly and Hemingway Editor are some of the best ones to check out.Scans your written text for any punctuation, grammar, and spelling errors.Suggests ideas for corrections and gives you explanations of why these suggestions would work.Gives real-time advice as you write so you can learn as you go.Print it out or keep it saved on your device.Refer to it while writing or editing.Use it to practice examples until different punctuation marks become second nature.Punctuation marks are not just random symbols on a keyboard; they serve as road signs, guiding readers through the landscape of our thoughts. They give voice to our words, adding emotion and nuance, enhancing clarity, and ensuring the message we wish to convey is received as intended.Consider the difference between Lets eat, Mom and Lets eat Mom. The misuse of punctuation can, at times, lead to quite a grim misunderstanding.

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