

SMART PUNCTUATION LESSON 1: PERIODS (FULL STOPS)

Background & Foundational Knowledge

Do you know what a sentence is? It won't do you any good to know how to punctuate sentences if you don't know what sentences actually are.

Sentences are groups of words, with a **subject** and a verb, that express a complete thought.

The **dog** ran around the yard.

The **subject** of a sentence tells us whom or what the sentence is about.

The verb of the sentence tells us what the subject is or is doing.

There are only three punctuation marks that we can use to end sentences: periods, question marks, and exclamation marks.

In this lesson, we'll focus on periods, which are also called full stops.

History – The Period

Periods originated in the Greek system of punctuation that was started around 200 BC by a man named Aristophanes of Byzantium, and they were called terminal dots.

In his system of punctuation, there were only three dots used at different heights. These dots were used to show how much breath a person would need to take in order to read a passage of text aloud. The high-level dot meant that the reader needed to take a very long pause because there was a long passage of text ahead. That dot was the beginning of our period.

Starting in the 9th century, terminal dots were written low, as they are today, rather than high.

Speakers of US English call these periods, and most speakers of British English call these full stops. We use them a lot. In fact, about half of all punctuation marks used are periods. Periods also appear in URLs, where they are called dots, and as decimal points in numbers.

Lesson & Rules – The Period

Periods have a few uses, but the main way we use them is to end sentences. They show that an idea is complete.

We can also use them after initials, in abbreviations, and in a few other cases.

A period is generally followed by a single space.

1. Periods With Sentences

- a. Sentences that don't ask questions and are not said with emotion end with a period. This means that all declarative sentences (statements) and many imperative sentences (commands) end with periods.
 - Let's have peanut butter sandwiches for lunch.
 - Please shut the door.
- b. Use a period after an indirect question. Indirect questions let us know that someone has asked a question, but they don't give the person's exact words.
 - My sister asked for a peanut butter sandwich in her lunch.

2. Periods With Initials

- a. An initial is the first letter of a name or word. Use a period and a space after initials in names. (But note that news style does not use a space between the initials.) If the initials are used for a person's full name, don't use periods.
 - A. A. Milne and E. B. White were famous authors.
 - JFK and FDR were presidents.
- b. Style guides vary about using periods after initials of nonhuman proper nouns. Be consistent in whichever rule you choose. If you're writing for a specific style, look up this rule in your style guide.
 - I'm from the USA, and I'm traveling to the UK.
 - I'm from the U.S.A., and I'm traveling to the U.K.

3. Periods With Abbreviations & Acronyms

- a. An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or phrase. Use a period and a space after most abbreviations. For small-letter abbreviations such as a.m. and p.m., place a period after each letter, but don't place a space between the internal period(s).
- Mr. and Mrs. Johnson woke up at 7:00 a.m. on Sept. 6.

If a sentence ends with an abbreviation and is a statement, end with just one period. If the sentence ends with an abbreviation and is a question or an exclamation, add the question mark or exclamation mark immediately after the abbreviation.

- My bedtime is 8:00 p.m.
- Do you actually go to sleep at 8:00 p.m.?
- I would feel so rested if I went to sleep at 8:00 p.m.!

If an abbreviation is followed immediately by another punctuation mark, don't add a space after it.

- My parents work in Washington D.C., but they live in Virginia.

- b. Abbreviations for nouns that are all capital letters generally do not take periods.
- I watched TV after I listened to a CD.
- c. Scientific and technical abbreviations generally do not take periods.
- The speed limit is 60 mph.
 - The car weighs 1,500 kg.
- d. Don't use periods after the letters in acronyms. Acronyms are formed from the initial letters of words, and they're pronounced as words.
- My dad helped build cameras for NASA.

Fun Fact

Mrs. and Mr. are abbreviations used with people's titles. Miss isn't an abbreviation. When using it as part of a woman's title, don't put a period after it. Ms. isn't technically an abbreviation either, but we still use a period after it!

4. Periods With URL Addresses

- a. Add a period immediately after web addresses that end sentences.
 - We learned grammar from www.GrammarRevolution.com.

Exercises – Periods

Let's practice applying the rules for periods!

For exercises A and B, add periods where they are needed. Feel free to look above at the rules you just learned. You are not expected to have all of these rules memorized.

For exercise C, you'll be writing your own sentences.

Exercise A: Add The Periods (Rules 1 and 2)

1. Please pass the strawberries
2. Give me your hand
3. F Scott Fitzgerald is best known for his book *Tender is the Night*
4. My mom asked me to close the door
5. J M Barrie created the character Peter Pan
6. My sister told me she had a sore arm
7. W B Yeats was an Irish poet
8. I will read two chapters of my new book
9. H G Wells wrote a book called *The Time Machine*
10. J K Rowling stands for Joanne Kathleen Rowling

Exercise B: Add The Periods (Rules 3 and 4)

1. Miss Campbell is my teacher this year
2. My appointment with Dr Jay is at 2:30 p m on Monday
3. Franklin D Roosevelt was the 32nd president of the United States
4. Please pass the book and the DVD
5. Ask Mr May and Mrs Enright where your shoes are
6. I order books from www.Amazon.com
7. L M Montgomery wrote *Anne of Green Gables*
8. I have never seen a black and white TV
9. My car can reach speeds of 70 mph on the highway
10. Ms Jones donated her salary to UNICEF

Exercise C: Write Your Own Sentences (Rules 1-3)

1. Write a statement – a sentence that ends with a period. (Rule 1)

2. Write a sentence that includes an indirect question. (Rule 1)

3. Write a sentence that includes initials. (Rule 2)

4. Write a sentence that includes an abbreviation or acronym. (Rule 3)

Exercise Answers

Exercise A: Add The Periods (Rules 1 and 2)

1. Please pass the strawberries.
2. Give me your hand.
3. F. Scott Fitzgerald is best known for his book *Tender is the Night*.
4. My mom asked me to close the door.
5. J. M. Barrie created the character Peter Pan.
6. My sister told me she had a sore arm.
7. W. B. Yeats was an Irish poet.
8. I will read two chapters of my new book.
9. H. G. Wells wrote a book called *The Time Machine*.
10. J. K. Rowling stands for Joanne Kathleen Rowling.

Exercise B: Add The Periods (Rules 3 and 4)

1. Miss Campbell is my teacher this year.
2. My appointment with Dr. Jay is at 2:30 p.m. on Monday.
3. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the 32nd president of the United States.
4. Please pass the book and the DVD.
5. Ask Mr. May and Mrs. Enright where your shoes are.
6. I order books from www.Amazon.com.
7. L. M. Montgomery wrote *Anne of Green Gables*.
8. I have never seen a black and white TV.
9. My car can reach speeds of 70 mph on the highway.
10. Ms. Jones donated her salary to UNICEF.

Exercise C: Write Your Own Sentences

Answers will vary.