

Fact sheet - Level 1

Full Stops

Full stops are placed at the end of a sentence and gives us time to gather our breath or our thoughts, before moving on to the next sentence. Ignore the pause and sentences run together: meaning becomes confused

e.g.

John said nothing.

The school is closed because of the snow.

You can usually tell where a full stop goes by reading your work aloud.

Full stops are also used in some abbreviations.

e.g.

a.m.

p.m.

etc.

They are not used:

When we end a sentence with another punctuation mark, e.g. a question mark or an exclamation mark. Understand? Of course you do!

Factsheet – Level 2

Full Stop ■

The full stop is the strongest mark of punctuation. It tells us we need a definite pause at the end of a sentence, giving us time to gather our breath or our thoughts, before moving on to the next sentence. Ignore the pause and sentences run together: meaning becomes confused. Full stops are also used in some abbreviations.

1. Use a full stop at the end of a sentence:
 - The man arrived. He sat down.
2. Use full stops with abbreviations (in an abbreviation the last letter of the word and of the abbreviation are not the same):
 - Co. (Company)
 - etc. (et cetera)
 - M.P. (Member of Parliament)
3. Do not use full stops with contractions (in a contraction the last letter of the word and of the contraction are the same):
 - Ltd (Limited)
 - Dr (Doctor)
 - St (Saint)

Exclamation Mark



An exclamation mark usually shows strong feeling, such as surprise, anger or joy. Using an exclamation mark when writing is rather like shouting or raising your voice when speaking. Exclamation marks are most commonly used in writing quoted speech. You should avoid using exclamation marks in formal writing, unless absolutely necessary.

1. Use an exclamation mark to indicate strong feelings or a raised voice in speech:
 - She shouted at him, "Go away! I hate you!"
 - He exclaimed: "What a fantastic house you have!"
 - "Good heavens!" he said, "Is that true?"
 - "Help!"
 - "Shut up!"
 - "Stop!"
2. Many interjections need an exclamation mark:
 - "Hi! What's new?"
 - "Oh! When are you going?"
 - "Ouch! That hurt."
3. A non-question sentence beginning with "what" or "how" is often an exclamation and requires an exclamation mark:
 - What idiots we are! (*We are such idiots.*)
 - How pretty she looked in that dress! (*She looked very pretty in that dress.*)
4. In very **informal** writing (personal letter or email), people sometimes use two or more exclamation marks together:
 - I met John yesterday. He is so handsome!!!
 - Remember, don't be late!!
 - I'll never understand this language!!!!

Remember, try to **avoid** exclamation marks in formal writing such as an essay or business letter.



The main function of a question mark is to indicate a question or query.

1. Use a question mark at the end of all direct questions:
 - What is your name?
 - How much money did you transfer?
 - Did you send euro pounds?
2. Use a question mark after a tag question:
 - You're French, aren't you?
 - Snow isn't green, is it?
 - He should go and see a doctor, shouldn't he?
3. Don't forget to use a question mark at the end of a sentence that really is a direct question:
 - How else would I get there, after all?
 - What if I said to you, "I don't love you any more"?
 - "Who knows when I'll die?", he asked rhetorically.
4. In very **informal** writing (personal letter or email), people sometimes use a question mark to turn a statement into a question:
 - See you at 9 pm?

In the same situation, they may use two or three question marks together to show that they are not sure about something:

- I think you said it would cost £10???
5. Do **not** use a question mark after an indirect or reported question:
 - The teacher asked them what their names were. (*What are your names?*)
 - John asked Mary if she loved him. (*Do you love me?*)
 - I'm wondering if she's coming. (*Is she coming?*)

6. Many polite requests or instructions are made in the form of a question. But because they are not really questions, they do **not** take a question mark:
- Could you please send me your catalogue.
 - Would all first-class and business-class passengers now start boarding.
7. Be careful with titles and abbreviations when question marks are involved:
- "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" was a play before it was a film.
 - *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was a play before it was a film.
 - Have you seen the film "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?"?
 - Have you seen the film *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf??*
 - Have you ever been to L.A.?

Note that there should be **no** space immediately before a question mark.

For more information and games about these punctuation marks go to

www.grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/marks

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks2bitesize/english/spelling_grammar/punctuation/play.shtml