

Punctuation & Grammar Checklist



Use this checklist to review your draft.

Editor's Review	All Things Considered
<input type="checkbox"/> Are the title's main words capitalized ?	Does the title fit the piece? Did you brainstorm titles?
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the beginning of each sentence capitalized ?	Speaking of capitalizing—how about the proper nouns?
<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling You triple-checked for misspellings.	Misspellings: A huge turn-off for editors, teachers & readers. Read aloud, use spelling tools, and ask someone you trust to proofread your draft.
<input type="checkbox"/> Paragraphs & Double Spacing •Did you indent and organize your paragraphs? •Did you double space between lines?	Either indent or start each paragraph on the left margin after inserting a blank line between paragraphs—but be consistent with your formatting. •For every new thought, idea, or change of scene. •When a character speaks.
<input type="checkbox"/> Quotation Marks Do you use them correctly when writing dialogue?	Unless the dialogue ends the sentence, you use a comma, question mark, or exclamation mark <i>after</i> the dialogue but before the end quotation marks.
<input type="checkbox"/> Dialogue •Are you changing paragraphs when characters speak, even if only using one word? •Do your dialogue tags make it clear who is talking? •Do most of your dialogue tags use <i>said</i> ?	Dialogue Tagline: Lets the reader know who is speaking. Unless the dialogue ends the sentence, you use a comma, question mark, or exclamation mark after the dialogue but <i>before</i> the end quotation marks. “Please tell me if I’m doing this right?” asked Jenna. Startled awake, the teacher said, “It’s perfect.”
<input type="checkbox"/> Apostrophe Shows possession or used for contractions.	•Lincoln’s hat •It’s=it is don’t=do not they’re=they are
<input type="checkbox"/> Commas •Perhaps the most misused of all punctuation marks.	• Compound Sentence: A compound sentence is when you have two complete thoughts (sentences) separated by a conjunction (and, but, or, because, which, however). Remember to put a comma BEFORE the conjunction in a compound sentence.
The right column highlights comma rules for some of the most common comma conundrums.	• Comma Splice: A comma between two complete sentences. Use a conjunction after the comma or just put a period between the sentences.
	Yuck: I wrote an amazing first draft, I revised it anyway. Yay: I wrote an amazing first draft, but I revised it anyway. • City & State: Separate city and state with a comma. • Direct Address: Use a comma after a character’s name if addressing the character by name. Ex: <i>Dad, I’m carsick!</i> or <i>Carrie, will you go to the dance with me?</i>

□ **Commas...still.**

•**Words That Introduce A Sentence Commas:**

Use a comma after certain words that introduce a sentence, such as *Well, Yes, No, Sure, Hey* and more.

•**Appositive Comma Rule:** An **appositive** is a word (or even a group of words) that explains more about the noun right in front of it (or them).

Example: **Correct:** *Jill, who is my sister, shut the door.*

Incorrect: *The man a guy never on time hurried home.*

Correct: *The man, a guy never on time, hurried home.*

• **Setting Off Names:** Use commas to set off the name, nickname, term of endearment, or title of a person directly addressed like you do in this part of your writing.

Examples:

Will you, Aisha, do that assignment for me?

Yes, old friend, I will.

Good day, Captain!

The Pause Comma? Right, not a rule. A *pause* in reading is not always a reliable reason to use a comma. No comma unless you can apply a specific rule.

□ **Run-on Sentence** You have a **run-on sentence** because you did not put in a period, question mark, or exclamation mark when you finished a complete thought or idea.

Reread slowly to see where the thought/idea comes to an end. Much easier to catch when proofreading aloud.

□ **Fragment**
You have a **sentence fragment** because only part of the thought/idea is completed.

You may also be missing a verb that tells what the subject is doing or what was done to the subject. Again, proofread aloud, and even proof starting from the end of your story and go backwards to help you focus on individual sentences. Weird but effective.

□ **Verb Tense Rule**
Did you check to see if you are mixing around your verb tenses?

When you write a story or an essay, remember to keep your verbs all in the same tense. We usually write in past tense or present tense—rarely the future.

□ **Subject-Verb Agreement**
Must agree in number.

Single subject=single verb • Plural subject=plural verb
These **clothes are** too small for me./**Everybody enjoys** a good book.

□ **Plurals & Possessives** Beating a dead horse regarding apostrophes, but did you put them in them in the right place for singular or plural possession?

Singular possession=**'s** and plural possession=**'s**
Keeping my cat**'s** toys away from my dog is hard.
Keeping my two cats**'** toys away from my dog is hard.

□ **Point of View** Is your **POV** consistent? It is so important, it appears on *two* checklists!

It is very common to accidentally change the POV, particularly if you started a draft using one POV and decided the story worked better from a different POV.

□ **Punctuation Spacing** | space after periods, question marks, commas, exclamation marks, colons...

2 spaces were only "a thing" because wooden typesetting blocks were too wide for | space.

