

Punctuation

We already know why it is important to punctuate your sentences correctly (Remember the letter that Babli wrote to Bunty?).

It is difficult to understand the rules of punctuation. The best thing is to learn by practice. Read the following statements and find out how a comma or a period etc. can change the meaning of the sentence completely.

1. We have to finish packing Jason before we start the car.
2. We have to finish packing, Jason, before we start the car.
3. The coach chose Sally and Latisha and Paula left.
4. The coach chose Sally, and Latisha and Paula left.
5. The coach chose Sally and Latisha, and Paula left.
6. Mr. Busby, that mean old man is waiting for you.
7. Mr. Busby, that mean old man, is waiting for you.

Want to give it a try?

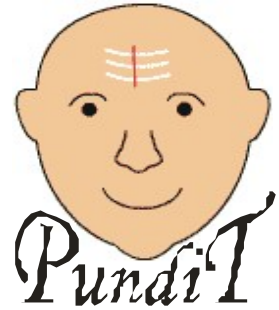
Punctuate the following sentences.

1. suzanne visited India Pakistan and Nepal Kelly however visited only India
2. id be glad to manage your campaign said Rhonda but Ive never done anything that ambitious before
3. would anyone including you children like to help me out onstage
4. although its an unusual request the students representative would like to address the faculty next Monday at 230
5. The baby can have any of the following milk juice bananas or cookies
6. In the spring they plant crops in the fall they harvest them.
7. Luke loves his wife and other women love Luke.
8. Even if you disagree wait until the other person has finished speaking.
9. Her grandmother, who lives in India, has written a book her other grandmother is also a writer.
10. We have three cats Scout Bear and Truck.
11. I am looking for a good, used car.
12. If it starts to rain I will not drive to Boston my sister however will.
13. The teacher expected a lot, from her students, and for the most part she was not disappointed.
14. The well-known author arrived drunk.
15. Heather – works hard at the museum; so does Craig, her assistant.
16. I'm impressed with the hospital's up to date procedures.
17. He is well-known around here.
18. Rudy's biggest booster was himself surprise, surprise.
19. The committee keeps an up to date file on all contributors.
20. Unfortunately, her qualifications M.D., Ph.D. did not make up for her personality.
21. The star crossed lovers were separated once again.
22. Butterfly believed Pinkerton – completely.
23. Lewis' argument convinced the manager to increase security.
24. Its raining again; the porch's floor will get drenched.
25. Her parents wishes' had governed her every move.
26. Wont you join us at our familys' summer home this year?
27. I could've told you that Buzz' teacher would win that award.
28. Is this not funny?
29. The evergreen shed it's needles all over the yard.
30. "A boys best friend is his mother."
31. Have you read james dickey's poem the leap? asked Ron.
32. of course I have replied lucy it's one of my favourite poems.
33. The statement ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country was first spoken by John F Kennedy at his Inauguration.
34. When I finish my work I sighed I'll be happy to go with you



Solution (*Other answers are possible*)

1. Suzanne visited India, Pakistan, and Nepal; Kelly, however, visited only India.
2. "I'd be glad to manage your campaign," said Rhonda, "but I've never done anything that ambitious before."
3. Would anyone, including you children, like to help me out onstage?
4. Although it's an unusual request, the students' representative would like to address the faculty next Monday at 2:30.
5. The baby can have any of the following: milk, juice, bananas, or cookies.
6. In the spring they plant crops; in the fall they harvest them.
7. Luke loves his wife, and other women love Luke.
8. Even if you disagree, wait until the other person has finished speaking.
9. Her grandmother who lives in India has written a book; her other grandmother is also a writer.
10. We have three cats: Scout, Bear, and Truck.
11. I am looking for a good used car.
12. If it starts to rain, I will not drive to Boston; my sister, however, will.
13. The teacher expected a lot from her students, and, for the most part, she was not disappointed.
14. Correct sentence.
15. Heather works hard at the museum; so does Craig, her assistant.
16. I'm impressed with the hospital's up-to-date procedures.
17. He is well known around here.
18. Rudy's biggest booster was himself (surprise, surprise!).
19. The committee keeps an up-to-date file on all contributors.
20. Unfortunately, her qualifications – M.D., Ph.D. – did not make up for her personality.
21. The star-crossed lovers were separated once again.
22. Butterfly believed Pinkerton completely.
23. Lewis's argument convinced the manager to increase security.
24. It's raining again; the floor of the porch will get drenched. (*Porch's is technically correct, but it sounds awkward.*)
25. Her parents' wishes had governed her every move.
26. Won't you join us at our family's summer home this year?
27. I could've told you that Buzz's teacher would win that award.
28. Isn't this funny?
29. The evergreen shed its needles all over the yard.
30. "A boy's best friend is his mother."
31. "Have you read James Dickey's poem 'The Leap'?" asked Ron.
32. "Of course I have," replied Lucy. "It's one of my favourite poems."
33. The statement, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country," was first spoken by John F. Kennedy at his inauguration.
34. "When I finish my work," I sighed, "I'll be happy to go with you."



Forming plural nouns

Most nouns

You form most plurals by adding "s" or "es" to the singular: *boys, monkeys, peas, dresses, foxes*. When a word ends in a "y" that is not preceded by a vowel, you change the "y" to "i" and then add "es": *Ponies, babies, armies, ladies, stories, cities, duties, flies, days, plays, keys, boys, toys, monkeys*.

Words ending in 'F'

Form plurals of most words ending in the letter "F" by changing the "F" to "VES". Examples: *Knives, leaves, lives, wives, sheaves, calves, shelves, elves, thieves, halves, wolves, loaves, beliefs, proofs, chiefs, roofs, cliffs, safes, dwarfs or dwarves, scarves or scarfs, griefs, strifes, gulfs, turfs, hoofs, wharfs or wharves, briefs, serfs*.

Nouns ending in 'O'

You can usually make the plural form of nouns ending in "o" by adding "s" or "es". Examples: Potatoes, tomatoes, tornadoes, mosquitoes, heroes, vetoes, cargoes, radios, portfolios, tattoos, studios, rodeos, memos, photos, cellos, piccolos, pianos, tempos, virtuosos, buffaloes, mangoes, cargoes, negroes, volcanoes, mottoes, echoes, zeroes, cantos, dynamos, solos, mementos, ratios, quartos, bamboos, cuckoos, curios, cameos, portfolios, embryos, stereos.

And here's one exception you'll recognise: the singular "graffito" which we almost never use, becomes the widely known plural "graffiti".

Peculiar plurals

No simple adding of any letter or letters to form these plurals. You need a different word altogether.

Examples: Men, women, feet, teeth, mice, lice, geese, dormice, children, oxen, dice.

No change in plural form

Here the singular is the same as the plural.

Examples: Public, police, innings, gross, yoke, brace, sheep, deer, fish, swine, hair, dozen, score, hundred, thousand, pound, kilogram, series, species, means.

Nouns from other languages

Plurals of most nouns borrowed directly from other languages maintain their original spellings.



Singular	Plural
Agendum	Agenda <i>Agenda is normally used as a singular.</i>
Alumnus	Alumni
Analysis	Analyses
Appendix	Appendices
Axis	Axes
Basis	Bases
Beau	Beaus, beaux
Cherub	Cherubs, cherubim
Crisis	Crises
Criterion	Criteria
Datum	Data
Dictum	Dicta
Erratum	Errata
Formula	Formulae, formulas
Fungus	Fungi, funguses
Genius	geniuses
Index	Indices
Medium	Mediums, media
Memorandum	Memorandums, memoranda
Oasis	Oases
Phenomenon	Phenomena
Plateau	Plateaus
Radius	Radii
Seraph	Seraphim, seraphs
Stadium	Stadiums, stadia
Stimulus	Stimuli
Thesis	Theses

Proper nouns

Plurals of proper nouns generally follow the same rules that are applicable to plurals of common nouns: You add "s" or, if a name ends in "s", "sh", "ch", "x", or "z", you add "es".

1. The Murrays always made me feel at home.
2. We don't keep up with the Joneses.
3. Three Januarys ago they travelled to Australia.
4. Last year there were three Charlies, two Janices and two Lewises in our class.
5. The Lopezes and the Husches are old friends.

Hyphenated nouns

If two or more words are joined by hyphens, add the plural ending to the main noun.

Examples: **Commanders-in-chief**, maid-**servants**, **passers-by**, **sons-in-law**, **lookers-on**, **men-of-war**, step-**sons**, **fathers-in-law**, **attorneys-at-law**.

But words not joined by a hyphen are treated differently.

Examples: Spoonfuls, bucketfuls, cupfuls, etc.

Compound nouns

If two words are joined to form a singular noun, form the plural by adding "s" or "-es".

Note that *foreman* will become *foremen*.

Don't open up a closed word to make a plural. For example, "**spoonful**" becomes "**spoonfuls**" and not "**spoonsful**".

Rewrite if necessary

If following the general rules for noun plurals results in awkward constructions, try rewriting the sentence.

1. The museum purchased three Matisses and two Velasquezes and two Grises.

Ugh! A clever writer might recast the sentence to avoid such awkwardness.

2. The museum purchased three painting by Matiss, two by Velasquez, and two by Gris.

That's much better!

Plural noun oddities

It's the English language, and there are always situations that aren't easy to categorise. Here are some plural noun oddities that are helpful to know.



Plurals of letters and numbers

When you have letters and numbers (whether spelled out or in figures) used as nouns, you form the plural by adding "s" alone.

Examples: The three Rs, in twos and threes, IOUs, the early 1950s.

Plurals of confusing abbreviations and letters

In the case of abbreviations with periods, lowercase letters used as nouns, and capital letters that would be confusing if "s" alone were added, form the plural by adding "'s" (apostrophe + s).

Examples: M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s, p's and q's, A's, I's, SOS's, a's, b's, r's, 5's, 3's, M.L.A.'s, B.A.'s.

1. Dot your i's and cut your t's.
2. Your b's are not clear.
3. His R's are peculiar.
4. Your 5's look like 3's



Note – The plural of p (page) is pp and of l (line) is ll.

The living language

Over time, certain words that were once accepted fall out of favour, and other words take their place. This is also true of noun plurals. For example, the plurals of **fungus** and **cactus** used to be **fungi** and **cacti**, but now many dictionaries list those as second choices, after **funguses** and **cactuses**.

Singular words that look plural

Examples: Economics, physics, scissors, tweezers, pliers, measles, mumps, herpes, AIDS, billiards, checkers, dominoes, molasses, whereabouts

Exceptions to the plural noun rules

Some words are the same in both singular and plural form. Many of them name animals: **deer, elk, sheep, fish, moose, swine, vermin.**


Another example is the word "series". It can be used as singular and as a plural.

1. The television series **is** interesting.
2. Three new series **are** being premiered this week.

Masculine, feminine

Can you tell the female of the species from the male?

Match the masculine noun with its corresponding feminine noun.

Masculine		Feminine
Bachelor		Heifer
Hart		Maid
Horse		Hen
Buck		Roe
Bullock		Nun
Bull/ox		Ewe
Earl		Bitch
Monk/friar		Filly
Nephew		Niece
Cock		Doe
Dog		Mare
Colt		Cow
Drone		Countess
Stag		Duck
Ram		Goose
Gander		Hind
Drake		Bee
Signor		Czarina
Sultan		Vixen
Hero		Sultana
Wizard		Signora
Czar		Witch
Fox		Heroine

Solution

Masculine (Feminine)

Bachelor (maid), hart (roe), horse (mare), buck (doe), bull/ox (cow), bullock (heifer), cock (hen), monk/friar (nun), colt (filly), nephew (niece), dog (bitch), drake (duck), drone (bee), ram (ewe), earl (countess), stag (hind), gander (goose), wizard (witch), hero (heroine), czar (czarina), sultan (sultana), signor (signora), fox (vixen).

Possessives

A possessive is used to show ownership or belonging. You can show this relationship by using certain words: the laughter of my niece; the building that belongs to Jai; or the new motorcycle owned by my father.

Another common way to show possession is to add an apostrophe + *s* to the end of the word that names the owner: **my niece's laughter; Jai's building or my father's new motorcycle.** This rule works for all *singular* owners, even if their names end in *-s*, *-z*, *-ch*, etc.

For example: the church's interior, Charles's four children, Mumtaz's acting career, etc.

Possessives of plural nouns ending in "-s"

To make them into possessives, just add an apostrophe.

Examples: The girls' car (more than one girls own it), ten dollars' worth of gas, the Thomases' children.

For irregular plural nouns

For irregular plural nouns NOT ending in "-s", you need to add an apostrophe + "-s".

Examples: The *children's* toys, *women's* rights.

Possessive pronouns

The following list makes up what we call possessive pronouns: *my, you, his, her, its, our, their, mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, and theirs.*

Getting possessives right

Yes, we know that, in most cases it is a matter of adding "s". But that does not always yield an elegant solution.

Incorrect/awkward	Correct/better
This is Ram's father's house.	This house belongs to Ram's father.
The car's wheel was unusual.	The wheel of the car was unusual
Their building's yard was a mess.	The yard of their building was a mess.
The spices' odour lured me into the shop.	The odour of the spices lured me into the shop.
Ram's friend's father has come.	The father of Ram's friend has come.
I bought this book from MacMillan's shop.	I bought this book from MacMillan's. (<i>"Shop" is understood.</i>)
I am a student of St. John's College.	I am a student of St. John's. (<i>"College" is understood.</i>)
I have my dinner today at my friend's house.	I have my dinner today at my friend's. (<i>"House" is understood.</i>)
This book is their.	This book is theirs.
Ram is a friend of Mohan.	Ram is a friend of Mohan's.
<i>Tempest</i> is a play of Shakespeare.	<i>Tempest</i> is a play of Shakespeare's.



More examples of correct possessives

Nature's laws, fortune's favour, death's sting, one day's leave, at week's end, at a stone's throw, by month's end, at a pound's cost, a minute's rest, at a yard's distance, at an arm's length, at one's fingertips, for heaven's sake, for goodness' sake, for conscience' sake; for justice' sake, Moses' laws, Keats's poetry (or Keats' poetry), Collins's poetry (or Collins' poetry), girls' hostel, boys' school, horses' tails, men's club, children's books, The Rana of Mewar's palace, The Government of India's orders, Legouis and Cazamian's History of English Literature, Rowe and Webb's Book of Grammar, Marlowe's and Shakespeare's Plays, Ram's and Mohan's houses, leg of the table (not, table's leg), lock of the door (not, door's lock), pages of the book (not, book's pages), nib of the pen (not, pen's nib), wings of a butterfly, sting of a scorpion, legs of a stag.

It's or its?

Remember that "it's" is a contraction of "it is." Whenever you are not sure, substitute "it is" in place of "its" or "it's". If the sentence doesn't make sense, you need to write "its", the possessive, without the apostrophe.

Exercise

Correctly punctuate the following paragraph.

could you stop by the campus tonight professor sherman asked his daughter ginny ill be glad to she answered if youll let me bring you dinner her father paused for a moment he was distracted by several things happening all at once a student knocking on his office door a colleague waving an announcement in his direction and a car alarm going off outside his window are you still there dad dad ginny shouted into the receiver oh sorry dear he muttered its so busy here he glanced around his office which was a mess and then he cheered up lets just meet at a nice restaurant instead he suggested

One possible solution

"Could you stop by the campus tonight?" Professor Sherman asked his daughter Ginny. "I'll be glad to," she answered, "if you'll let me bring you dinner." Her father paused for a moment. He was distracted by several things happening all at once: a student knocking on his office door, a colleague waving an announcement in his direction, and a car alarm going off outside his window. "Are you still there, Dad? Dad!" Ginny shouted into the receiver. "Oh, sorry, dear," he muttered. "It's so busy here." He glanced around his office, which was a mess, and then he cheered up. "Let's just meet at a nice restaurant instead," he suggested.