

CHECKING END PUNCTUATION

The most essential kind of punctuation is end punctuation. It puts a stop to an utterance that is complete and self-contained. Here is a brief summary of end punctuation:

- (1) Use an **exclamation mark** to end an urgent request, order, curse, or shout.
Exclamation: Help! Stop bothering me! Somebody has locked the exits!
- (2) Remember to use the **question mark** even when a question is long or involved.
Question: Are we going to stand while a few individuals terrorize the city?
- (3) Use the **period** to mark off sentences that each have their own subject and complete verb. Omitting a period between two complete sentences produces a **fused sentence**.
Fused: My family never liked the new sister-in-law my brother hated her.
Revised: My family never liked the new sister-in-law. My brother hated her.
- (4) When a period marks off a unit that is not a complete sentence, the result is a **sentence fragment**. Look at the following sample sentence: “At the beginning of the story, a boy from Missouri meets a girl from Atlanta.” To get the basic pattern, you will have to ask, “Who does what, or what is what, in the sentence?” The answer to this question should emerge from the sentence as a complete statement: “A boy meets a girl” You can then safely separate the sentence from other complete sentences by a period. But sometimes the answer to “What does what?” emerges from a sentence telegram style.

Fragment: The wife working outside the home.

The train gone.

An invitation to come home.

Taxing down the runway.

Often we can turn a fragment into a complete sentence by supplying the missing verb, or the missing part of the verb. Sometimes we have to supply a subject *and* a verb.

Complete: The wife *is* working outside the home.

The train *was* gone.

It was an invitation to come home.

Sometimes a fragment supplies details or explanations for a preceding sentence. We can then link the fragment to that sentence, using a *colon* (meaning “as follows”), a *dash*, or sometimes a *comma*. Sometimes *no* punctuation is necessary.

Fragment: They liked basic foods. *Pork and beans, or potatoes and gravy.*

Completed: They liked basic foods: pork and beans, potatoes and gravy.

Fragment: The other driver was a woman. *The first to participate in the event.*

Completed: The other driver was a woman—the first to participate in the event.

Fragment: We saw the plane. *Taxiing down the runway.*

Completed: We saw the plane taxiing down the runway.

Check the punctuation in each of the following passages. Enter appropriate symbols in the boxes to the right: **S** for passages whose punctuation is satisfactory; **Frag** for passages that contain a sentence fragment; **U** for passages whose punctuation is unsatisfactory in some other way.

1. The book attacked modern architecture, especially the steel-and-glass style. 1. _____
2. College freshman find themselves in a new and different world. A world requiring many adjustments. 2. _____
3. Most Western movies are composed of two basic parts: the gun shooting scenes and the love scenes. 3. _____
4. High school students should take more practical courses. For example, shop courses and in home economics. 4. _____
5. I liked the gentleness of the characters in the play. Their simple and good way of life. 5. _____
6. What more can I say than that you will read the book from cover to cover without laying it down. 6. _____
7. You won't be able to see him. He has left for Alaska. 7. _____
8. Husbands and wives should develop a common interest in recreational activities. For instance, ball games, movies or traveling. 8. _____
9. Education has two purposes: to raise the level of the bottom and to take the lid off. The top. 9. _____
10. He married a minister's daughter. Without her father's consent. 10. _____
11. Your bill is long overdue. Please pay it! 11. _____
12. The church sponsored many social events, such as picnics and dances. 12. _____
13. Tim finally lost his job. The reason being his constant absences. 13. _____
14. He introduced me to Fred and Paul they both were good friends of his. 14. _____
15. We bought a new house: a two-story home in the suburbs. 15. _____
16. The newspapers report many crimes committed by adolescents. Young boys attacking the elderly in the streets. 16. _____
17. We know little about your sister's plans. She hasn't written in months. 17. _____
18. The voters voted against further development. To preserve the quality of life in the valley. 18. _____
19. How do you expect me to remember all these meaningless details. 19. _____
20. He had only one goal in life: to make money. 20. _____