

Writing and Tutorial Center

The Musical Art of Punctuation

Writing is a musical art! Punctuation helps to define the musicality of your writing and is essential to communicating meaning. By using punctuation correctly, you can create rhythm and flow—which dynamic writing relies on.

- .

A period ends a sentence and defines a complete thought.
- ,

Use commas to separate items in a list, like lemurs, meerkats, and capybaras.
- ;

Use a semicolon to connect two sentences gracefully; the meaning of each independent clause will blend mutually into the other.
- :

Use a colon to indicate a list of items: lemurs, meerkats, capybaras. You can also use a colon to signal that more information is forthcoming: colons and semicolons are different.
- Use an em dash either parenthetically—like this—or in a similar way to how you might use a colon—to indicate, with some sense of urgency, that more information is forthcoming.

CORRECT THE PUNCTUATION IN THESE SENTENCES

The capybara sat in the hot tub it looked extremely content.
I saw a painting a sculpture a hologram and a performance.
I brought my sketchpad; and I forgot my pencils.
Lemurs are fascinating, they have huge eyes and long tails.
Brooklyn is not just a place it's a state of mind
My roommate left a note: don't touch the blender she means it.
The exhibit was strange—unsettling even it made me think about shadows in a new way.

UNPUNCTUATED PARAGRAPH

Please punctuate the following paragraph, then add a sentence of your own:

yesterday i wandered through the botanical garden everything was shimmering in the rain i saw a hawk circling over the conservatory then i heard someone playing a flute it felt like a scene from a dream i didn't want it to end