

As early as kindergarten, students begin to learn about punctuation—what it is and how to use a period, question mark, and an exclamation point. The importance of punctuation is reflected in the Common Core State Standards (see CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.2.B). Later, of course, students learn about more sophisticated punctuation, including the comma, colon, semi-colon, and ellipsis.

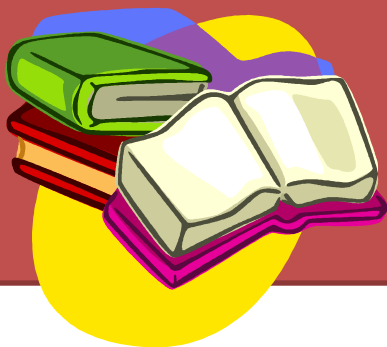
While understanding how to use these punctuation marks in their writing is critical for students to master, it is also essential for them to learn how to use these marks to modulate their voices when they are reading aloud.

When you are ready to review or relay for the first time how students should say punctuation, display the following page and discuss the information. Print out a copy and encourage students to refer to this reference.



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[Click here](#) to go to the Reading Gallery and have students practice saying punctuation while reading aloud.








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Saying Punctuation

Every sentence requires end punctuation—a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. Many sentences, especially complex ones, require other kinds of punctuation, including commas, colons, semi-colons, and ellipses. When you read a sentence aloud, you read the words in that sentence, but you “say” the punctuation in a way that helps the listener understand what you are saying. Here’s a quick guide that shows you how you “say” punctuation.

PUNCTUATION	SAMPLE SENTENCE	VOICE
Exclamation Point 	<i>Sit down!</i>	<i>voice goes up ↑ and then pauses </i>
Period 	<i>I have two cats.</i>	<i>voice drops ↓ and then pauses </i>
Question Mark 	<i>Do you eat sushi?</i>	<i>voice goes up ↑ and then pauses </i>
Comma 	<i>She answered the phone, but no one was there.</i>	<i>voice pauses briefly and then continues</i>
Semi-colon 	<i>They wanted to go to the concert; however, it was sold out.</i>	<i>voice pauses briefly and then continues</i>
Colon 	<i>I said I would bring the following food to the picnic: salad, fruit, and chips.</i>	<i>voice pauses a little longer than after a comma or semi-colon and then continues</i>
Ellipsis 	<i>It was a dark and stormy night ... in a strange and eerie house.</i> <i>No, I'm fine. Really ... I'm fine.</i> <i>I said I'd go, but then ...</i>	<i>voice continues as if there is no punctuation</i> <i>voice pauses to indicate hesitation</i> <i>voice pauses to indicate thought is trailing off</i>