

Periods

Period is derived from the Greek “periodos,” which means circuit.

PERIOD: “The British call the punctuation mark period (.) at the end of a sentence a ‘full stop.’ And that’s what it is. Like a STOP sign on a road, a period, except in abbreviations, requires a full stop, a halt, as Nurnberg¹ points out, not a mere SLOW DOWN, the punctuation for which is a comma. A period is included in the question mark (?) and the exclamation mark (!) and is therefore not used immediately after these punctuation marks. For the misuse of a comma for a period, see run-on sentence.”

RUN-ON SENTENCE: “A false sentence in which a comma is used instead of a period is a run-on sentence, sometimes called a *comma splice*, such as ‘She missed class, afterward she apologized.’ Perhaps the most common form of the error occurs with adverbs mistakenly used as conjunctions, such as *however*, as in ‘She missed class, however she apologized afterward.’ Make it: ‘She missed class. However, she apologized afterward.’”

– “*Words on Words*” by John B. Bremner

¹Maxwell Nurnberg, “Punctuation Pointers.” New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1968

Period pointers

◆ Periods are underused. They are small. They don’t take up much space. They’re free. If you write the way people talk you may never get around to using a period because people tend to go on and on and on without taking much of a break because they’re the ones talking and when you’re the one talking you don’t have to worry about punctuation and besides too often people talk without ever getting to the point, which is a period.

◆ Use them at the end of declarative and imperative sentences.

◆ Periods always, always, *always* go inside single and double quote marks.

◆ Use them in most abbreviations. Do not put a space between two initials to avoid splitting them between lines: *John F. Kennedy, T.S. Eliot.*

◆ If a sentence ends with an abbreviation, use only one period: *I’m going to get my groove on.*

◆ If a sentence ends in an ellipsis (...), use four periods – three to indicate the ellipsis and one to mark the end of the sentence: *The people of the United States adopted the Constitution to form a more perfect union. ...*

◆ You’ve probably reached the end of your sentence when...

- ☛ you’ve expressed a single thought.
- ☛ you’ve used a subject, verb and object.
- ☛ you’ve written more than you can speak without taking a breath.

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