

Punctuation

Functional Skills English Entry 3 - Handout

What is punctuation?

Punctuation marks are symbols used in writing to make meaning clear. For this topic, focus on commas, apostrophes, brackets and capital letters.

Key punctuation features

Feature	What does it do?	Example
Comma ,	Separates items in a list or separates parts of a sentence.	books, pens and folders
Apostrophe '	Shows omission (missing letters) or possession (belonging).	don't = do not Sara's bag
Brackets ()	Add extra information. The main sentence should still make sense without it.	My tutor (who teaches English) is helpful.
Capital letters	Show proper nouns, abbreviations or emphasis.	England / DVD / ALL

4-step exam strategy

- 1. Look carefully at the punctuation mark or capital letters.
- 2. Decide what job it is doing in that sentence.
- 3. Use the words around it to help you.
- 4. Choose the answer that explains the purpose, not just the name of the punctuation.

Quick exam examples

Example	Feature	Purpose
The course runs on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.	Commas	Separate items in a list.
Sara's bag is on the chair.	Apostrophe	Shows possession.
I'm going to college today.	Apostrophe	Shows omission: I am.
My tutor (who teaches English) is very helpful.	Brackets	Add extra information.
You must bring ALL your documents.	Capital letters	Add emphasis.