Special Edition
C21
ENGLISH FOR THE 21st CENTURY
A2 Elementary

Factsheet

Punctuation and capitalization

Basics

In writing, there are a number of ways capital letters and punctuation are used. If you have already done ***Write sentences***, you have probably thought about the punctuation and capitalization of sentences. What rules do you remember? And what rules do you already know? What punctuation marks do you regularly use?

The academic context

Using capitalization and punctuation correctly will help you make your writing precise and easy to understand. It will help you achieve higher marks for your work.

Key features

Punctuation

Here are the most important punctuation marks with their uses and examples:

Punctuation mark	Name	When to use it	Examples
.	Full stop	• To end a sentence	Football and art are my main interests.
?	Question mark	• To end a question	Where are you from?
!	Exclamation mark	• To end a sentence showing excitement or surprise	Look at me!
,	Comma	• To separate parts of a sentence to make it clearer • To separate items in a list	After each laboratory session, I write a report. I have two tutorials, four seminars, five lectures and two assignments every week.
'	Apostrophe	• To show possession • To show a letter is missing in a word	It is Funda's birthday today. She's from Izmir in Turkey.

Capitalization

Here are the most important reasons we use capital letters:

Use	Examples
To begin a sentence	The climate is hot and dry.
For names or proper nouns, for example: • people • countries • languages • towns/cities • months • days • rivers, deserts, mountains	 Lauryn Hill China English Mexico City June Monday the Thames, the Sahara, the Alps
In titles of books, films, etc.	*Don Quixote*
For the personal pronoun *I*.	For meetings, I wear a suit and tie.

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Challenges / difficulties

It can be easy to confuse your reader if you make a mistake in punctuation. Look at this sentence without punctuation:

My brothers lost

Punctuate the sentence and see if your sentence has the same meaning afterwards as your partner's.
Did you write this?

My brother's lost!
Meaning: My brother doesn't know where he is.

Or did you write this?

My brothers lost.
Meaning: My brothers were playing a game, which they lost.

You may also find that the use of capitalization and punctuation is different in other languages you speak. Find out where the differences are so you can avoid making mistakes.

How can I develop this skill?

You may notice that in everyday writing, such as text messages or emails, people don't always use capitals and punctuation. That's OK, but one way to improve your capitalization and punctuation is to practise using them in this kind of writing. For formal writing like essays, proposals, reports and reviews, you must use capitals and punctuation correctly, and you will find this easier if you practise using them in everyday life.

Learning outcome

You will understand the different uses of capital letters and improve your ability to use punctuation correctly in English.

Theory to practice

Read the text and highlight all the capitalization and punctuation. Can you explain why they are used in each sentence? There are a few punctuation marks that are not included in the Key features. What are they? Discuss with your partner and see if they agree.

Do you like to see and try a product in a store before you buy it online? When you're in a store, do you use your smartphone to check online prices? If your answers are 'yes', you are probably a showroomer.

Asia's shoppers are experts at showrooming. The top showroomers are in Vietnam. Forty per cent of Vietnamese people use their smartphones to compare prices in store and online. Many younger shoppers (aged 18–30) also use smartphones while shopping to compare prices and find the best deals.

Ways to get more practice

Work with a partner. Both write a short paragraph about what you have done today. Now exchange your work and see if you can find any capitalization or punctuation mistakes. Explain your corrections.

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