[ ] BRACKETS

Use brackets to add an explanation or comment to a direct quote:

The President insisted, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman [Monica Lewinsky]."
"This poem ["The Raven"] made Poe famous, but it's hardly my favorite," explained Professor Stallings.

Use brackets to enclose text that is already in parentheses:

According to this chart (Temperature Extremes [Fig. 4]), we've had a record-setting winter.

Put the Latin word "sic" in brackets to indicate that a mistake in a word or phrase appeared in the original source:

His fundraising letter began, "Dear Fiends [sic]."

: COLON

Use a colon to introduce ideas or a series of details that explain the preceding independent clause. A colon may call attention to an appositive, example, list, or a quotation:

Only one thing was important to him: the truth.
The reasons for divorce are many: money, infidelity, children, or boredom.
The sense of unity with nature is vividly shown in Zen Buddhist poetry: "An old pine tree preaches wisdom."

Use a colon when required by convention:

Biblical references: Genesis 1:1
Business letter salutations: Dear Professor Devall:
Periodical Volume and Number: Harper's 203:16
Time: 12:15 a.m. to 12:30 a.m.

— DASH

Formed by two hyphens, dashes mark an abrupt break in a sentence. Less formal than either parentheses or commas, a dash—highlighting whatever is set apart—also creates a dramatic pause.

Use a dash (instead of parentheses) when a parenthetic expression is lengthy, contains commas, or deserves special emphasis:

My grandmother's house—the stone estate in the country, not the clapboard cottage on the beach—has been sold.
Walter told me—and don't breathe a word of this to anyone—that he was fired Wednesday.
Use a dash to emphasize or to set off a single word, an appositive, or a summary:
There's one way in which to succeed—hard work.
I cannot believe what he puts on his hamburger—sauerkraut.
She graduated, married and divorced—all this change in just six months.

Use a dash to show an abrupt change in thought:
You are NOT dragging me to that Star Trek convention—oh, what the heck, start the car.

Use a dash to mark an interruption or pause in dialogue:
"Would—would you mind terribly?"

. . . ELLIPSIS

Use three spaced periods (ellipsis) to indicate the omission of one or more words in a direct quote. Beginning a quotation with an ellipsis is unnecessary. End a quotation with an ellipsis only if words have been omitted from the end of the final quoted sentence:
"No man is an island . . . every man is a piece of the continent."
"brilliant . . . an amazingly insightful film"

If the ellipsis represents the omission of a complete sentence or more, use four periods instead of three:
"Just before sunrise, forty-six Marines scrambled over the treacherous ridge . . . .
Nine hours after the assault began, fourteen of the soldiers were still alive."

! EXCLAMATION POINT

Use an exclamation point after a command or other expression that expresses strong feeling or deserves special emphasis:
For the last time, stop stalking me!
Fire! Fire!

Use exclamation points sparingly. Overuse dilutes their impact.

- HYPHEN

Hyphenate multiple words acting as a single adjective before a noun:
well-to-do businesswoman
greenish-blue eyes

Hyphenate compound numbers:
twenty-eight
ninety-three

Hyphenate certain prefixes and suffixes:
all- all-school queen
self- self-esteem
great- great-aunt
half- half-finished
-elect president-elect
Hyphenate words to avoid ambiguity:

Grandma Barnes no longer **recollects** how many grandchildren she has.
Since Sylvia auctioned all my Beanie Babies, I'll have to **re-collect** them.

Hyphenate some compound words to avoid awkward double or triple letters:

- anti-intellectual
- cross-stitch

Use a dictionary to check standard usage of hyphenated words, e.g., whistle blower, whistleblower, or whistle-blower.

Never use a hyphen between an adverb ending in “ly” and the adjective it modifies.

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**( ) PARENTHESES**

Use parentheses to enclose information that is helpful or informative but not essential:

- When you get to that big farmhouse (three miles from I-270), turn left.
- After Wanda graduates from college (Mizzou), she plans to join the Peace Corps.

If parentheses enclose a question or exclamation, keep the question mark or exclamation point inside the parentheses:

- Wyatt received Harold's text (when did he get an iPhone 6s?) and replied yesterday.

However, capitalize or include periods only if the parenthetical sentence is not enclosed within another complete sentence:

- I told my husband (we had been married only five days) that I missed him desperately.
- I told my husband that I missed him desperately. (We had been married only five days.)

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**/ SLASH**

The slash indicates contrasting terms or paired items:

- Allison took Advanced Astrophysics on a pass/fail basis.
- Although the player/manager committed eight errors in three innings, he still wouldn't take himself out of the game.

When quoting a poem, use a slash to indicate the end of a line, adding a space before and after the slash:

"The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity."