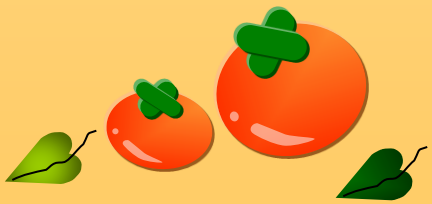
Basic English Writing

Yuying Chris Chang

http://homepage.ntust.edu.tw/yuying

Punctuation

1) Comma usage
2) Semicolons and colons
3) Colon
4) Apostrophe
5) Quotation marks



1). Comma Usage

a) **Use commas before coordinating conjunctions that join two main clauses,** but do not put them before conjunctions that join two words, two phrases, or two subordinate clauses

e.g.

Tom is a doctor, and John is a teacher.

Sam wanted the backpack and the watch so much.

b) **Use commas between elements in a series** (i.e. 3 or more words, 3 or more phrases, and 3 or more clauses; 2 or more adjectives without joining by “and”)

e.g.

I like bananas, apples, and oranges.

The bear waded into the shallow, swift river after the salmon.

c) **Use commas after introductory elements** (including words, preposition phrases of 5 words or more, infinitive and participial phrases, subordinate clause that precedes a main clause)

e.g.

In front of the house, there is an old tree.

To be honest, I greatly admired my teacher.

If you do not work hard, you will fail in the exam.

Making a big mistake, Mark listened to his wife.

d) Use commas before and after interrupting elements

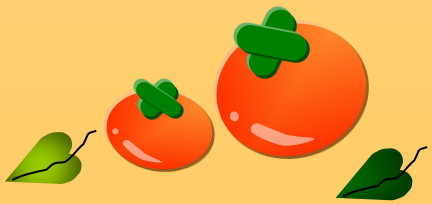
e.g.

Van Goh, feeling rejected and depressed, cut off most of his ear and sent it to his best friend.

2). **Semicolons**

To join only those independent clauses that are closely related in meaning

e.g. *The auditors made six recommendations**;** however, only one has been adopted so far.*



b) A series of elements embedded an internal comma

e.g.

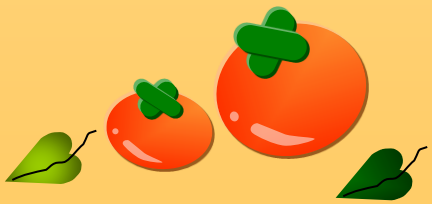
*My mom always believes three things: that every situation, no matter how grim, will be happily resolved**;** that no one knows more about human nature than she**;** and that I, who am thirty-five years old, will never be able to take care of myself.*

3). The Colon

a) A colon follows right after a main clause
b) It is used to give an example, an illustration, a restatement, a quotation, a series, or a list
c) The example, illustration, etc. could be clauses, phrases, words
d) It is generally not used after a verb

e.g.

- Mary furiously said: “You better get your friend out of here now!”
- The vase contains beautiful flowers: roses, tulips, and lavender.



4). The Apostrophe

a) To form contractions (e.g. *it's*, *I'm*)
b) To form the possessives of nouns and indefinite pronouns (e.g. *the boy's, one's*)
c) Do not use apostrophes with the possessive forms of personal pronouns (e.g. X *her's*)

5). Quotation Marks

To enclose direct quotations (not indirect quotations) and dialogue

e.g. *direct quotation*

Hal said, “I eat that Cheese cake.”

indirect quotation

Hal said that I ate that Cheese cake.

b) Place periods and commas inside quotation marks

e.g.

Welty wrote the short story "A Worn Path."

The singing star's fans used to say, "Beam me up, Amie."

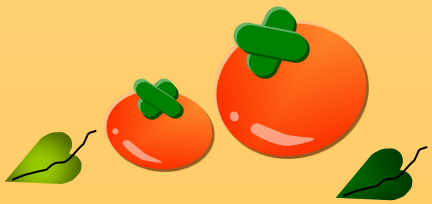
"Dismiss," said the frustrated coach.

c) Place colons and semicolons outside quotation marks

e.g.

*The class did not like the poem "Thoughts on Capital Punishment"**:** it was silly and sentimental, and the rhythm was awkward and inappropriate.*

*The journalist gave a story entitled "Mayor Caught Nude on the Beach"**;** it was just a joke for April Fools' Day.*



d) Place the question mark/exclamation inside the quotation marks if the quotation is a question/exclamation and vice verso.

e.g.

*Homer asked, **“**What is for dinner, my dear**?”***

*Did Herman really reply, **“**apples, bananas, and oranges**”?***

***“**What a nice day**!”** he shouted.*

*I insist that you stop calling me **“**dude**”!***

Exercise

who wants to be a millionaire the answer probably is i do yes most people want to be rich however having a lot of money is not as good for us as we think it would be this is true for people who win the lottery most lottery winners say that they are no happier than they were before they won all that money it's true that they usually have a good time at first they spend most of their first one million dollars on travel but when the early excitement of traveling has disappeared the happiness is also gone in addition lottery winners often lose their friends or have problems with their partners this happens because these people often ask for money and they get angry if they don't get it one study even shows that lottery winners spend most of their money in just a few years so you see being rich does not always make people happy sometimes a beautiful dream can turn into a nightmare

Adapted from Far East English Reader, B1

Key

Who wants to be a millionaire? The answer probably is "I do!" Yes, most people want to be rich. However having a lot of money is not as good for us as we think it would be. This is true for people who win the lottery. Most lottery winners say that they are no happier than they were before they won all that money. It's true that they usually have a good time at first. They spend most of their first one million dollars on travel, but when the early excitement of traveling has disappeared, the happiness is also gone. In addition, lottery winners often lose their friends or have problems with their partners. This happens because these people often ask for money, and they get angry if they don't get it. One study even shows that lottery winners spend most of their money in just a few years. So, you see, being rich does not always make people happy. Sometimes, a beautiful dream can turn into a nightmare.