Basic Punctuation for Everyday Writing

Practical English Skills for Work and Daily Communication



Name: _____

Group / Class: _____

Date: _____

Section 1: Capital Letters and End Marks

Learning Objective: Identify and use capital letters, full stops, question marks, and exclamation marks accurately in workplace and everyday sentences.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Sentence:** A complete unit of meaning made up of one or more clauses. It starts with a capital letter and ends with an end mark.
- **Proper Noun:** A specific name for a person, place, day of the week, or month (e.g. Sarah, Birmingham, Monday, July). Always capitalised.
- **Simple Sentence:** One independent clause containing a subject and a verb that makes complete sense on its own.

Guide to Sentence Endings:

Punctuation Mark	Purpose	Workplace Example
Full Stop (.)	Ends a standard statement or neutral instruction.	The delivery arrives at noon.
Question Mark (?)	Concludes an enquiry or request for information.	Have you signed the register?
Exclamation Mark (!)	Expresses urgency, strong feeling, or a safety warning.	Caution: forklift in operation!



Remember: Always capitalise the word **I** when writing about yourself, no matter where it appears in the sentence.

1. Correct the punctuation in each workplace sentence below. Rewrite the full sentence with correct capital letters, proper nouns, and the appropriate end mark (. , ? , or !).

Support Hint: Look closely for people's names, days of the week, cities, the pronoun 'I', and sentence starts.

a) on friday i need to speak with mark about the shift rota

b) can you deliver the parcels to birmingham before five o'clock

c) danger do not enter the warehouse without safety boots

d) sarah travels to leeds every monday and wednesday for training

2. Read the two workplace text messages below:

> **Message A:** You are covering the late shift today.
>
> **Message B:** You are covering the late shift today?

a) Explain how the change from a full stop to a question mark alters the meaning for the worker receiving the message.

b) Challenge: Write two versions of your own workplace sentence about a fire door. First, write it as a routine instruction using a full stop. Second, write it as an urgent safety warning using an exclamation mark.

Section 2: Commas in Lists and Compound Sentences

Learning Objective: Use commas accurately to separate items in lists and before coordinating conjunctions to form compound sentences.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Comma (,):** A punctuation mark indicating a brief pause or dividing items within a sentence.
- **Coordinating Conjunction:** A joining word (such as *and*, *but*, or *or*) used to connect two independent clauses.
- **Compound Sentence:** Two simple sentences joined together by a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

Worked Example: Commas in a List

When listing three or more items, separate each item with a comma. In standard British English, do not put a comma before the final 'and'.

Draft: Please bring your photo ID safety vest locker key and pen.

Corrected: Please bring your photo ID**,** safety vest**,** locker key and pen.

Worked Example: Building Compound Sentences

Join two related simple sentences into one flow using a comma followed by a conjunction:

- **and** (adds information): *The morning meeting finished at ten, and the team began the audit.*
- **but** (shows contrast): *I applied for the supervisor post, but I have not received a reply.*
- **or** (shows choice): *You can submit the timesheet online, or you can hand it to reception.*

1. Punctuate the lists in the workplace tasks below.

a) Read the supervisor's supply order below. Insert commas in the correct positions to separate the listed items.

Please order printer paper ballpoint pens box files sticky notes and permanent markers for the reception desk.

b) Write a complete sentence listing four tools, uniforms, or items of equipment you use at work or in class. Punctuate your list correctly with commas and 'and'.

2. Combine each pair of simple sentences into one compound sentence. Use a comma and the coordinating conjunction given in brackets.

Word Bank: , and | , but | , or

a) David completed the customer service course. He received his official certificate. *(and)*

b) Staff may take their lunch break in the canteen. They may use the outdoor seating area. *(or)*

c) The warehouse received twenty orders today. All parcels were dispatched on schedule. *(but)*

d) Challenge: Rewrite the following informal sentence into a correct compound sentence using a comma and the contrasting conjunction **but**:

I intended to attend the briefing, however my commuter train was cancelled.

Answers

Section 1: Capital Letters and End Marks

1. a) On Friday, I need to speak with Mark about the shift rota. (Accept with or without comma after introductory time phrase).

1. b) Can you deliver the parcels to Birmingham before five o'clock?

1. c) Danger: do not enter the warehouse without safety boots! (Accept "Danger! Do not enter the warehouse without safety boots.")

1. d) Sarah travels to Leeds every Monday and Wednesday for training.

2. a) Message A is an instruction or statement confirming that the worker is scheduled to work. Message B is an enquiry asking whether the worker is able or scheduled to work.

2. b) Challenge: Sample answers: Routine instruction: Please keep the fire door closed at all times. Urgent warning: Do not block the fire exit!

Section 2: Commas in Lists and Compound Sentences

1. a) Please order printer paper, ballpoint pens, box files, sticky notes and permanent markers for the reception desk.

1. b) Accept any sensible sentence naming four items with commas separating the first three and 'and' before the fourth (e.g. "I need my laptop, notepad, pen and highlighter for study.").

2. a) David completed the customer service course, and he received his official certificate.

2. b) Staff may take their lunch break in the canteen, or they may use the outdoor seating area.

2. c) The warehouse received twenty orders today, but all parcels were dispatched on schedule.

2. d) Challenge: I intended to attend the briefing, but my commuter train was cancelled.