The use of end punctuation in forming a complete sentence is a significant factor in writing clear, informative, and effective prose. A sentence can be categorized by type (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) and by purpose (declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory). Most sentences end with a period; however, sentences can also end with either a question mark or exclamation mark.

**USING THE PERIOD**

Use a period:

- after a declarative sentence (a sentence providing information or stating a fact): I am leaving on the next train.

- after an imperative sentence (a sentence making a request or stating a command): Close the door.

- after an indirect question (a sentence that reports a question rather than asking it directly): He asked if you would attend the meeting.

- after an abbreviation of titles: Mr., Ms., Dr., Jr., Sr.; Latin words or phrases: i.e. (that is), e.g. (for example), etc. (and so forth, and so on); time designations: a.m. (or AM), p.m. (or PM)

- after numbers and letters in an outline:

  I. ____________

  A. ____________

  1. ____________

  2. ____________

       a. ____________

       b. ____________

  B. ____________

  II. ____________

Do not use a period:

- after abbreviations of national or international agencies: NATO, UNESCO, HUD

- after abbreviations of labor unions: AFL, CIO, ILGWU

- after call letters of radio or television stations: WNBC, WLIB, WBAI
Using Periods to Form the Ellipsis Mark

The ellipsis mark consists of three spaced periods used to show intentional omission of words in a quoted passage: Abraham Lincoln said the following: “We are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation . . . can long endure.” If you delete a full sentence or more in the quoted passage, use a period before the ellipsis mark.

The ellipsis mark can also be used to indicate pause, hesitation, or interrupted speech: He seemed nervous . . . stared straight ahead . . . kept twitching and jerking . . . then he ran for shelter.

USING THE QUESTION MARK

Use a question mark:

- after a direct question: Are you going? It's a long trip, isn't it?
- within parentheses to indicate doubt or uncertainty about a fact: Chaucer was born in 1340 (?) and died in 1400.

Do not use a question mark:

- after an indirect questions (one that is reported rather than asked directly): He asked if I was going.
- polite requests in question form: Will you please send me three copies.

USING THE EXCLAMATION POINT

Use an exclamation point after an emphatic word, phrase, clause, or sentence: Wonderful! What a surprise!

Be sparing in the use of exclamation points. If a sentence expresses only mild emotion or excitement, do not use the exclamation point. A general guideline is to use the exclamation point in sentences in which you use "how" or "what" as intensifiers: How dreadful! What a calamity!