

What is punctuation?

Punctuation (الترميم) in Arabic language is putting certain marks in writing to indicate the places where speech begins, and where it stops and continues after stopping.

Basically, the aim of the punctuation marks (علامات الترميم) is to tell the reader where there is a pause in the sentence or group of sentences for the reader. And they're also used to help the reader identify the tone of the text as well as the purpose of the words being said (whether the words are meant as a question or are used to express surprise for example).

The comma الفاصلة

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The comma is used in the position that the writer deems appropriate or to finish writing a meaningful sentence. In the following paragraphs, we will learn about some of the comma positions as follows:

- A.** After the sentence that completes its meaning (بين أجزاء الكلام التام): It is worth noting that the comma is placed after the end of the meaningful sentence, but the writer wants to complete the paragraph, for example in this sentence:

إن العلم نور، يهدي العقل وينير القلب.

Knowledge is light, it guides the mind and enlightens the heart.

- B.** Between types and sections (بين الشيء وأقسامه): In the event that the writer wants to display the types or sections of a specific thing, then between each type and the other it is necessary to put a comma, such as:

The red color, white color, and black color. اللون الأحمر، واللون الأبيض، واللون الأسود.

- C.** Between the condition and the clause of the condition (بين الشرط والجزاء): The comma is placed in the conditional statement between the condition and its clause, especially if the conditional statement is long, such as:

If you do not study well, you will not succeed in the exam. إن لم تذاكر جيدًا، لن تنجح في الامتحان.

After the oath: the comma is also placed in the oath statement between the oath and its clause, such as:

والله، لأضربنك. By God, I will hit you.

Punctuation

D. When someone is calling someone else in Arabic, we add “ya” before the name of the person (بعد لفظ المنادى). It can be translated in “Oh” as in “Oh, Amjad. Open the door.”

Although this structure isn’t commonly used in English and sounds like something from a literature book, it’s widely used in Arabic, and the noun that follows “ya” is a noun in the invocative case which we will study about in detail later.

For example: يا أمجد، افتح الباب

In this sentence, someone is calling Amjad (Oh Amjad) so the word “Amjad” is followed by a comma.

E. It is used after “yes” نعم or “no” لا - كلا or بلى (which is the positive response to a negative question). بعد حرف الجواب.

Example:

- Did you see the moon? هل رأيت القمر؟

- Yes, I saw it. نعم، رأيته.

The full stop النقطة



It’s used when the meaning of the sentence is complete.

For example: ذهب الفتى إلى الحديقة ليلعب مع أصدقائه. The boy went to the park to play with his friends.

The meaning of the sentence is complete so we write a fullstop.

Quotation marks علامتا التنصيص



They’re used at the beginning and at the end of quoted speech, when you’re repeating someone else’s speech word by word.

Example:

قال عماد لأخيه : "لا تنس أنني سأكون دائماً معك، فلا داعي للقلق".

Emaad told his brother “don’t forget that I will always be there with you, so there’s no need to worry.”

Note: usually in English, the quoted speech comes first then the verb follows (Example: “Be careful,” said Jane) while in Arabic the verb comes first like in the sentence above. I translated the sentence in English and kept the Arabic structure to make it easier to understand.

The brackets القوسان الهلايان



When someone is adding more information or explanation to the sentence. Note that the additional sentence (the one between brackets) can be removed from the sentence and the meaning will not change. It will be less nuanced, of course because there is a detail lost but the general meaning is still the same.

Example :

الظروف الطبيعية القاسية (البرد الشديد ثم الجفاف) أفسدت موسم الفواكه هذا العام.

The harsh environmental conditions (the extreme cold and the drought) have ruined the entire fruit crop this year.

Colon النقطتان الرأسيتان



They are used after statements and reported speech

Example:

قال عماد لأخيه: "لا تنس أنني سأكون دائماً معك، فلا داعي للقلق."

Emaad told his brother: "don't forget that I will always be there with you, so there's no need to worry."

They are also used when you're stating the different types of something, for example:

رأيت في السلة أنواعاً مختلفة من الفاكهة: البرتقال، و التفاح، و المشمش، و الفراولة.

I saw different types of fruit in the basket : oranges, apples, apricots, and strawberries.

In this example, the speaker is stating the different types of fruits, which is why they used the colon.

Question mark علامة الاستفهام



Used after a question. Example:

What's your name? ما اسمك؟

Exclamation mark علامة التعجب



Used to express the speaker's surprise.

Example:

Your painting is so beautiful!

ما أجمل لوحتك!

Punctuation

الشَّرْطَة Dash

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It is used at the beginning of a conversation, and to separate the speech of two people.

Example:

- هل أعدت لندى ساعتها التي نسيتهما؟
- بالطبع، أعدتها لها بالأمس.
- ممتاز.

- Did you return Nada's watch that she forgot?
- Of course, I gave it back yesterday.
- Excellent.

The two dashes are also used in a manner that is similar to the use of the brackets, when we put them at the beginning or end of an additional sentence that is used to give extra meaning but if it's omitted, the meaning of the original sentence will be the same.

Example:

كنت جالسًا في فناء الدار، فسمعت - ولم أكن أتجسس- مشاجرة بين جاري وزوجه.

I was sitting in the backyard, so I heard –and I wasn't eavesdropping- a fight between my neighbour and his spouse.

So, as you can see, the example that is between the two dashes is an additional piece of information, if it is removed, we will still be able to understand the sentence.

الفاصلة المنقوطة The semicolon

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It's used between long sentences connected to each other and they share a purpose.

Example:

خير الكلام ما قل ودل؛ ولم يطل فيمّل.

Good discourse is what makes sense with brevity; and it is not too long to afflict boredom.

The purpose of the two parts of the sentence is to explain what qualities good discourse has.

It is also used to separate sentences in which the meaning is complete but the sentences are linked with a certain preposition.

The Arabic Companion's Guide To Writing

Example:

إن الناس لا ينظرون إلى الزمن الذي تم فيه العمل ؛ وإنما ينظرون إلى مقدار جودته وإتقانه.

People don't pay attention to the time that has been taken to complete a task; **but** they pay attention to the quality and accuracy in which it has been performed.

Instead of putting these two long sentences next to one another, we separated them with the semicolon so that it will be easier to understand the meaning.

The ellipsis علامة الحذف



It's also known as **نقط الحذف**

These points are added in the place of the omitted speech. The person can omit parts of a sentence for many reasons.

In speech, we sometimes leave sentences unfinished for a variety of reasons. Maybe we forgot what we wanted to say, or maybe our listeners already know what we'll say, so we don't need to say it.

In writing, this occurrence is represented by an ellipsis. When an ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence or quote, it means that the speaker has trailed off before finishing.

Example:

هل تريد بعض السكر في قهوتك أم ...

Would you like sugar for your coffee, or . . .

We can see that the punctuation marks and their uses in Arabic are very similar to other languages, but it's still important.

Task 1: Indicate which punctuation marks are used in the following sentence:

”استيقظ محمد نشيئا، ثم ذهب إلى المدرسة، وقابل أصدقائه في طابور الصباح، فقال له أحد أصدقائه كم عدد حصص اليوم؟ فرد عليه محمد وقال: 6 حصص.“

الفاصلة

علامات التنصيص

النقطتان الرأسيتان

علامة الاستفهام

علامة التعجب

النقطة

Punctuation

Task 2: Add the appropriate punctuation marks in the following sentences:

- ذهبت سلمى مع عائلتها لقضاء العطلة في العقبة []
- كانت زينب معتمدة على نفسها [] تقوم بتنظيف المنزل [] تنظيف غرفتها [] وترتيب العابها []
- كم كان الطقس جميلا اليوم []
- قال أحمد [] هل يمكنني زيارة جدي ليلا [] قالت أسماء [] سأذهب معك []
- هل ستعود إلى المنزل []
- ما أجمل فصل الربيع []
- قال محمد [] سأذهب إلى المغرب العربي []

Task 3: The following sentences have the wrong punctuation marks. Re-write the sentences with the correct punctuation:

استيقظت سارة صباح يوم الاثنين. وقامت بأداء فريضتها: وذهبت إلى المدرسة. قابلت صديقتها في طابور المدرسة وحضرا سويا يومهم الدراسي الممتع. رجعت سارة إلى المنزل فعندما علمت بأن والدتها قد أعدت لها أكلتها المفضلة قالت. كم أنت عظيمة يا أمي؟ فسعدت الأم لسعادة ابنتها ثم قالت لها بدلي ثيابك. وأقيم فرضك ثم نأكل سويا. وتحكي لي عن يومك ومن قابلتي!.

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