

## 1 Here's the Idea

Other punctuation marks include hyphens, apostrophes, dashes, and parentheses. Like commas, semicolons, and colons, these punctuation marks help clarify your writing.

### Hyphens

- ▶ **Use a hyphen if part of a word must be carried over from one line to the next.**

Ancient stargazers were intrigued and fascinated by the movements of the planets and other heavenly bodies.

Only divide words of two or more syllables. Never divide one-syllable words like *growl* or *weight*, and do not leave a single letter at the end or beginning of a line. For instance, these divisions would be wrong: *e-lection*, *cloud-y*.

- ▶ **Use hyphens in compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.**

eighty-eight constellations      twenty-five astronomers

- ▶ **Use hyphens in fractions.**

one-third of the students      three-fourths of the course

- ▶ **Use hyphens in certain compound nouns.**

cross-references      great-grandfather

- ▶ **Use a hyphen between words that function as a compound adjective before a noun.**

The Milky Way is a much-studied galaxy.

Such a compound is not usually hyphenated when it follows the noun it modifies.

The Milky Way galaxy has been much studied.

Do not use a hyphen between an adverb ending in *-ly* and the adjective it modifies.

Over the years many people have conducted carefully timed observations of comets.

Use a hyphen after the prefixes *all-*, *ex-*, or *self-* (as in *all-around*, *ex-president*, and *self-employed*). If in doubt, use the dictionary to check hyphenation.

## Apostrophes

### ► Use apostrophes to form the possessive forms of nouns.

**Singular noun** + **'s**: student's, instructor's, writer's

Use an apostrophe and s even if the singular noun ends in s:  
*Carlos's*.

**Plural noun** + **'**: boys', books', Smiths'

Plural nouns that do not end in s take an apostrophe and s:  
*women's*, *children's*.

Add only an apostrophe to a classical name ending in s: *Jesus'*, *Moses'*, *Zeus'*.

### ► To form the possessive of an indefinite pronoun, use an apostrophe and s.

everybody + **'s** = everybody's

someone + **'s** = someone's

Do not use apostrophes in possessive personal pronouns: *hers*, *ours*, *yours*, *its*, *theirs*. Do not confuse the possessive form *its* with the contraction *it's* (*it is*).

**It's** fun to watch the space show in the planetarium.

Compared with **its** tail, a comet's nucleus is extremely small.

### ► Use an apostrophe and s to form the plural of a letter, a numeral, or a word referred to as a word.

ABC's

three 4's

two n's

yes's and no's

### ► Use an apostrophe to show the omission of numbers in a date.

the summer of '99 (the summer of 1999)

If it is not clear what century is intended, write out the entire year number.

- **Use an apostrophe in a contraction.** In a contraction words are joined with one or more letters left out. An apostrophe shows where the letter or letters have been omitted.

they're = they are

shouldn't = should not

## Dashes

- **Use dashes to signal an abrupt change of thought or set off an idea that breaks into the flow of a sentence.**

Stargazing and comet tracking —two of the oldest pastimes— are not just for astronomers.

- **Use a dash after a series to indicate that a summary statement follows.**

Halley, Encke, and Klemola —each of these people had a comet named after him.

Do not overuse dashes, especially in formal writing. They can make your writing appear too casual. Also, do not use dashes to replace semicolons or periods.

## Parentheses

- **Use parentheses to set off material that is loosely related to the sentence or paragraph in which it occurs.**

Ancient stargazers created the constellations (such as Orion, the great hunter, and Leo, the lion) by connecting the bright stars with imaginary lines.

If a complete sentence enclosed in parentheses stands alone, it is punctuated and capitalized like any other sentence.

Constellations were named for gods, people, animals, and objects. (Actually, this is how we got the zodiac.)

When a parenthetical sentence occurs within another sentence, it does not begin with a capital letter. An end mark is included only if the parenthetical sentence is a question or exclamation.

On clear, dark nights you can see up to 3,000 stars with the naked eye (can you believe it?), but only a few comets are bright enough to be seen with the naked eye.