

Capitalization and Punctuation

We use a capital letter for proper nouns. Here are some rules to help you remember when to use capital letters:

- First and last names of people
Robert, Anna, Smith
- Names of days, months, holidays
Tuesday, July, Halloween
- Geographic locations: streets, cities, states, countries, rivers, oceans, mountain ranges, etc.
First Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada, China, Ohio River, Pacific Ocean
- Names of companies, buildings, parks, sports teams
General Motors, Seacrest Hotel, Grand Canyon National Park, New York Yankees
- Abbreviations and titles
Coastal Hwy., Ms., Dr., President, Gov., Star Wars

Use a period (.) at the end of a sentence and with abbreviations. Use a question mark (?) at the end of a question.

Commas

One way we use a comma in a note, letter, or email is after the name of the person we are writing to. For example, in a note to a manager, supervisor, or customer, you begin with a polite greeting. After the person's name you use a comma:

- Dear Ms. Whitney,
- Ms. Whitney,

If you know the person you are writing to on a friendly level, you can use the person's first name and a comma:

- Dear Roger,
- Roger,

It is *not* correct to begin with a greeting that looks like this:

- Dear Ms. Whitney –
- Roger –

Using the comma correctly in a greeting reflects well on you and your employer.

We also use commas after introductory clauses at the beginning of sentences. An introductory clause often begins with a word such as *if, when, before, or after*.

- If you need help filling out the form, ask Nancy in the personnel department.
- When we arrived at work this morning, we saw fire trucks in front of the building.
- Before Nigel makes an important decision, he asks his wife for advice.
- After the painters finished painting the hotel lobby, they took a break for lunch.

Check your sentences carefully when you write to make sure you are using commas correctly.

Imperative Sentences

In workplace writing, you will often write imperative sentences. An imperative sentence tells us to do something. Its job is to give directions or instructions, or to make a polite request.

Please remember to sign in before beginning your work shift.

Don't forget to sign out at the end of your work shift.

The subject of an imperative sentence is always *you*. However, the word *you* is not written in the sentence. But as the reader, we understand that the sentence is telling us to do something.

Apostrophes and Contractions

One reason we use apostrophes is to write contractions. A contraction is a short form of two words put together to make one word. We use contractions all the time. Words like *I'm* (*I am*) and *don't* (*do not*) are contractions.

The apostrophe in a contraction shows that one or more letters have been omitted. For example:

- *You're* means *you are*. The apostrophe in *you're* shows that the letter *a* in the word *are* has been omitted.
- *I'll* means *I will*. The apostrophe in *I'll* shows that the letters *wi* in the word *will* have been omitted.

Commas in Compound Sentences

We use commas in compound sentences. Compound means more than one. A compound sentence is two simple sentences joined by a comma and a conjunction. Here are two simple sentences:

Jodie vacuumed the rugs. Hector polished the conference table.

We can put these sentences together to make a compound sentence by using a comma and a conjunction. Conjunctions are words such as *and*, *but*, *or*, and *so*.

Jodie vacuumed the rugs, and Hector polished the conference table.

Here are some other examples of compound sentences:

- *Jonathan didn't bring his lunch to work today, so he bought his lunch in the cafeteria.*
- *Should we take the train to work, or should we take the bus?*
- *Working part-time while going to school isn't easy, but I know it's the only way to get ahead.*

Using commas correctly shows that you are a good writer and know how to communicate your ideas.

Present, Past, and Future Tenses

Sentences have a subject and a predicate. The main, or most important, word in the predicate is the verb.

The verb tells us what the subject is or does. The verb also tells us when something happens—in the past, present, or future. We call these different time frames verb tenses: present tense, past tense, and future tense.

Present tense: Sammy *starts* his new job today.

Past tense: Sammy *started* his new job yesterday.

Future tense: Sammy *will start* his new job tomorrow.

Sammy *is going to start* his new job tomorrow.

It is important to use verb tenses correctly in your workplace writing. Using the wrong verb tense can confuse the reader. Mistakes in verb tenses do not reflect well on you as a writer.

Transitional Words and Phrases

When we write, we use certain words and phrases to transition, or move, from one idea to another. We call these transitional words and phrases. They help the reader understand the connection between ideas.

Here are some common transitional words and phrases you can use in your workplace writing. Put a comma after a transitional word or phrase.

Transitional Word or Phrase	Meaning	Example
After that	then	<i>This morning, Louis fixed the water heater. After that, he repaired the broken window.</i>
As a result	because of that	<i>We had heavy rain today. As a result, the highway was flooded.</i>
Consequently	so, as a result	<i>I was sick today and couldn't work. Consequently, I will have to work Saturday to make up my hours.</i>
First, second, etc.	first in order, second in order, etc.	<i>First, ask the customer the reason for the return. Second, ask her if she has the receipt.</i>
For example	used to show a specific thing that explains what you mean	<i>You will use your writing skills often in the workplace. For example, you will write notes, emails, reports, and letters.</i>
For instance	for example	<i>Good writers check their work. For instance, they always check the spelling, punctuation, and grammar.</i>
However	but	<i>Jill and Diana work for the same company. However, they work in different locations.</i>
In addition	used to add information	<i>We need to order paper and toner for the copy machine. In addition, we need to order staples and folders.</i>
Next	immediately after	<i>First, open the can of paint. Next, stir the paint with the wooden stir stick.</i>
Then	immediately after	<i>Fill out the application form. Then, sign it.</i>
Therefore	so, as a result, that's why	<i>The cafeteria is being repainted. Therefore, it will be closed today.</i>

Gerunds

A gerund is a noun formed from a verb by adding *-ing*. We use gerunds to name an action. Words like *writing*, *sleeping*, *eating*, *thinking*, *working*, and *studying* are gerunds. We use gerunds the same way we use nouns. For example, we use nouns and gerunds as the subject of a sentence or after a preposition.

- *Working* long hours can make you tired.
- Good *writing* takes time and patience.
- *Being* the boss isn't always an easy job.
- Thank you for *giving* me a ride home.
- I look forward to *hearing* from you soon.
- I appreciate your *helping* me with my email.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations are short forms of words. Here are several common abbreviations used in business letters.

Common business-related abbreviations

Co.	Company
Corp.	Corporation
Dept.	Department
Inc.	Incorporated

Common address abbreviations and symbols

Apt.	Apartment
Ave.	Avenue
Bldg.	Building
Blvd.	Boulevard
Dr.	Drive
PO Box	Post Office Box
St.	Street
Ste.	Suite
#	Number (4140 Clover Dr., #101)
N., S., E., W.	North, South, East, and West in street addresses