



PROOFREADING 101

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LESSON TWO

Punctuation

How are you doing so far? Feeling good about the first lesson? Don't feel bad if you get some, or even a lot, wrong on the homework and quizzes. That's why you're taking this class, to learn this stuff, right?

This lesson is all about punctuation. While this is not an exhaustive list, we will review the main rules for proofreading for punctuation. Rules are noted from *CMOS* and *CWMS* for more reference.

Note: *CMOS* stands for the seventeenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *CWMS* stands for *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style*, fourth edition. To find out more about any of these rules, refer to the appropriate style guide.

Commas

Commas are one of the most difficult areas of punctuation for writers, readers, and editors alike. There are simply so many rules and ways to break them. As we learned in lesson 1, consistency is key. *CMOS* 6.16 goes further and says, "Effective use of the comma involves good judgment, with the goal being ease of reading." *Ease of reading* is the whole point of punctuation after all.

If we were to cover all the rules regarding commas, we could take the entire course. So, we'll just review the basics. Read all the rules in *CMOS* 6.16–6.55 to have a solid understanding.

Serial comma. *CMOS* 6.19, *CWMS* p. 132

The Chicago Manual of Style, *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style*, and Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* all state that the serial comma, which is that comma before *and* (or another conjunction) in a series of three or more elements, should *always* be used.

"Hailey's manuscript was intriguing, romantic, and suspenseful."

However, this is one rule where *The Associated Press Stylebook (AP)* differs from *CMOS*. Magazine and newspaper publishers prefer to leave out the comma before *and* in a series, unless doing so could cause confusion or misreading.

So, if you're editing an article, leave out the serial comma unless it's needed for clarity. If you're editing books, or short stories that will be included in a book, use the serial comma *every* time.

Independent clauses. *CMOS* 6.22, *CWMS* p. 130

Independent clauses that can stand on their own as sentences are joined using a coordinating conjunction like *and*, *but*, *or*, *so*, etc.

“I’ve always wanted to take a cruise, but I can get seasick in a little canoe.”

However, if one of the independent clauses is very short, the comma can be dropped.

“Please set your backpack down and come here.”

Semicolons can also be used to join two independent clauses *without* a conjunction. See *CMOS* 6.56.

Restrictive vs. nonrestrictive clauses. *CMOS* 6.27, *CWMS* p. 131

A word or phrase that restates a noun or pronoun in different words is set off by commas.

“My husband, Richard, took me out to dinner when I sold my first article.”

My husband’s name is Richard, so either “my husband” or “Richard” could be eliminated from this sentence without changing its meaning.

If the word or phrase has a *restrictive* function (it identifies the noun more specifically), it is *not* set off by commas.

“My son Michael was born eight years after his brother.”

From the context, you know that I have more than one son, and “Michael” identifies which of my sons is being referred to. So, no commas.

Periods

Spacing. *CMOS* 6.7, *CWMS* p. 357

One space or two spaces between sentences?

“I’m used to typing two spaces between sentences. Do I really have to change now?”

Publishers want one space between sentences now, not two. When you edit a manuscript, watch for that. You can either let the client know about this rule or do a Find and Replace to catch them yourself. Even if a client knows there’s only supposed to be one space between sentences, some double spaces may show up.

Run-in quotations. *CMOS* 13.69, *CWMS* p. 332

With run-in quotations (quotes that are placed within the text of a paragraph), the period goes at the end, *after* the closing parenthesis of the reference. No period before the closing quotation marks.

In the gospel of John, Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6 NIV).

Block-indented quotations. *CMOS* 13.70, *CWMS* p. 332

With block-indented quotations (where the whole quote is indented on the left or on both sides), the period goes after the last word of the quote. No punctuation after the closing parenthesis.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1 NKJV)

Apostrophes

Possessives. *CMOS* 7.16–29, 5.20; *CWMS* pp. 297–299

Adding an apostrophe *s* (’*s*) to make a noun possessive is pretty basic, but sometimes it gets tricky.

An apostrophe *s* should be in each of the underlined words below to show possession. Yes, *s*’*s* is the correct form here.

“Chris’s collection of some of Robert Burns’s poems went to John Williams’s house.”

Words ending with *x*, *z*, the *eez* sound, or the *ez* sound used to be open to debate, but the standard today is based on *CMOS*, which states that names ending in an *eez* sound get the extra *s*. The latest version of *CWMS* agrees.

Note: *CWMS* used to state that the extra *s* should be dropped in these cases (i.e. *Xerxes*, *Ramses*, and *Jesus*); but now the manuals agree to add the apostrophe *s* in all cases, whether these ending sounds are pronounced or not. However, some Christian publishers still use only an apostrophe after *Jesus*, so always refer to the publisher’s style guide.

“Jesus’*s* disciples had heard all about Xerxes’*s* army and Ramses’*s* castle.”

Plurals. *CMOS* 7.5–15, *CWMS* p. 295

Even though some pluralized words may look funny if you just add an *s* (or, as in example 5 below, an *es*), as a general rule of thumb, do not use an apostrophe to make a noun plural.

- No ifs, ands, or buts about it.
- The teacher listed the dos and don’ts.
- She was born in the 1980s.
- There were five Tims, four Ricks, and three Larrys on the publishing committee.
- We’re just keeping up with the Joneses.

- I had to go to three DMVs to get my license renewed.
- Melinda got all As and Bs on her report card.
- My professor has two MAs and three PhDs.

Lowercase letters are the exception to this rule:

- Don't forget to dot your i's and cross your t's.
- Mind your p's and q's.

If you come across a plural that would be misunderstood without an apostrophe, you should use one. For instance, A's and I's could be mistaken for "As" and "Is" without an apostrophe.

Note: Similar to what we learned in lesson 1, other than the popular expressions used in these examples and scholastic grades, letters used *as letters* are italicized. For example, "Plurals are usually formed by adding *s* or *es*." See *CMOS* 7.64.

Omissions. *CMOS* 6.115, 6.117, 9.30

An apostrophe can be used to replace omitted letters or numbers. Be sure to use an apostrophe and *not* a left single quotation mark. (When you type the apostrophe key at the beginning of a word, the computer assumes you're using it as a single quotation mark, so it automatically curls out to the left.) Apostrophes only curl out to the right, not to the left.

"Kimberly graduated with the class of '82." (Not '82.)
 "Let's go an' get 'em." (Not 'em.)

Quotation Marks

With commas and periods. *CMOS* 6.9, *CWMS* pp. 344–345

Closing quotation marks always come *after* a comma or period. There are a few exceptions, but they're rare.

The writers' conference offered fiction workshops on "Characterization," "Point of View," and "Floating Body Parts."

With question marks and exclamation points. *CMOS* 6.70, 6.74; *CWMS* pp. 344–345

Question marks and exclamation points should be placed *inside* quotation marks when they are part of the quoted material; otherwise, they should be *outside*.

Bob cried, "Did that acquisitions editor even read my proposal?"
 Jerry angrily replied, "He sure didn't read mine!"
 They have no basis on which to say, "We don't use this kind of material!"
 What gives them the right to claim, "Your work doesn't suit our needs"?

Quotes within quotes. *CMOS* 13.30, *CWMS* p. 323

When a quote must be set off within another quote, single quotation marks are used inside the double quotation marks to show the quoted portion.

“The angel reassured them. ‘Don’t be afraid!’ he said. ‘I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.’” (Luke 2:10 NLT)

Straight Versus Curly

There is a difference between straight and curly apostrophes and quotation marks. Straight ones are considered typos (*CMOS* 6.115, 6.117).

Most word-processing programs will convert unidirectional (straight) apostrophes and quotation marks to directional (curly) ones if that feature is selected in the options menu when that key is hit. However, many manuscripts have a combination of straight and curly apostrophes and quotation marks due to copying and pasting from different documents and sources. *CMOS* prefers directional marks and says to remove all unidirectional marks. Simply do a Find and Replace to change all. Be sure to do it for single and double quotation marks separately.

Note: When using an apostrophe for an omission, as mentioned in a previous section, a straight apostrophe will most likely be changed to a left single quotation mark, since this is the default. If you have omissions in your content, be sure to review them individually after the Find and Replace.

Ellipses

The most common use of the ellipsis (also called suspension points) is when one or more words are omitted from a quoted passage (*CMOS* 13.50–58, *CWMS* pp. 161–162).

An ellipsis consists of three dots, with a space *before*, a space *after*, and a space *between* each dot. But it should always be on one line using nonbreaking spaces (Control+Shift+Space). It should not begin on one line with two dots and have the third dot on the following line.

An ellipsis character with nonbreaking spaces (Control+Alt+.) can be generated by most word-processing programs (with a space before and after) if that is the author’s preference. Microsoft Word will usually change the ellipsis to three nonbreaking dots if you have it set this way.

Regardless of which why you choose, be consistent.

Fragmented speech. *CMOS* 13.41

Use an ellipsis for faltering or fragmented speech, usually accompanied by confusion, insecurity, distress, or uncertainty.

“The dictionary . . . where did I put that?” Jill muttered. (with nonbreaking spaces)
Or: “The dictionary . . . where did I put that?” Jill muttered. (ellipsis character)

Ellipses are also used at the end of a line of dialogue when the speaker’s words trail off.

“But I thought . . .”
Or: “But I thought . . .”

Ellipsis with a period. *CMOS* 13.53

A period is added *before* an ellipsis to show an omission afterward. The preceding and following sentences should be complete sentences.

When not to use ellipses. *CMOS* 13.52, *CWMS* p. 162

Except in rare cases, do not use ellipsis points at the beginning or end of a quotation, including Scripture.

Dashes

There are two types of dashes.

1. em dash: — (about three hyphens long)
2. en dash: – (shorter than an em dash but longer than a hyphen)

For books (*Chicago* style), there's no space before or after either dash.

Em dashes. *CMOS* 6.85–6.92, *CWMS* pp. 162–164

These are the most commonly used dashes and often replace commas, parentheses, or colons. Avoid overuse.

Tip: On a PC, press Ctrl + Alt + hyphen (only in Microsoft programs). Unicode is Alt + 0151 (in any program including Gmail Subject lines). On a Mac, press Alt/Option + Shift + hyphen.

“Parents must look deeper than the actions of their children—to their hearts—to train them in God’s way.”

Break in thought. Em dashes can denote a sudden break in thought or an abrupt change in sentence structure.

“Will he—can he—obtain the necessary endorsements?”

Interruption. Em dashes can be used in dialogue to indicate that a person’s speech has been interrupted.

“Well,” Jim began, “I thought I might—”

En dashes. *CMOS* 6.78–84, *CWMS* pp. 165–166

En dashes are primarily used in number ranges to replace the words *to* or *through* when indicating consecutive numbers in dates, times, or reference numbers. Do not use the word *from* before the number range.

Tip: On a PC, press Ctrl + hyphen (only in Microsoft programs). Unicode is Alt + 0150 (in any program including Gmail Subject lines). On a Mac, press Alt/Option + hyphen.

“John 3:16–18 is on pages 2031–2032 in the Bible I own, which was published somewhere around 1980–1985.”

Capitalization

Beyond the basic capitals at the beginning of a sentence or proper nouns, words should be capitalized for titles and specific terms. Proofreaders must also know the principles of headline-style capitalization.

Note: Capitalization should *not* be used to emphasize a word or phrase in a sentence. Italics should be used for emphasis.

Family relationships. *CMOS* 8.36, *CWMS* p. 94

A term indicating a family relationship (kinship) is lowercased when it's used generically or when it's preceded by a modifier.

“the youngest mother in the group”
“my dad”
“your mom”

It should be capitalized when it is used as the person's name.

“Please call me back, Mom.”

Terms of endearment. *CWMS* p. 94

According to *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style*, terms of endearment (*honey, dear, sweetheart, darling*) are lowercased. *The Chicago Manual of Style* does not address this specifically, other than to be consistent.

Terms of respect. *CMOS* 8.32

Do not capitalize “sir” or “ma'am” (except when it's part of a person's name, as in *Sir Lancelot* or *Madam President*). “His” and “her” titles are always capitalized (*Her Royal Highness*). “My” titles are not capitalized (*my lady*).

Full caps versus small caps. *CWMS* pp. 334–335, 355–356

Small capital letters LIKE THIS are less common than they once were. Some publishers do not use them, while others preserve them in Scripture quotations. Cap-and-small-cap words like *LORD* and *GOD* have different meanings in the Old Testament than *Lord* and *God*. Though the standard is to *not* use small caps, in some cases this decision is left up to the publisher or author.

However, *CWMS* says, “In scholarly works and serious nonfiction, quotations from Scripture should reflect the typographical rendering of the version cited.” Regardless of the decision, *CWMS* says to be consistent.

Capitalization of religious terms. *CWMS* pp. 95–101

Some religious terms are capitalized in Christian writing that are not capitalized in the general market. See the detailed list in *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style* (pp. 101–114). Though this list is quite comprehensive, more information is explained by looking up individual words in “The Word List,” part 2 of *CWMS*, beginning on page 400.

Brand names and trademarks. *CMOS* 8.153–155

Some words are capitalized due to branding and trademarks. Words like *Kleenex* and *Sharpie* are always capitalized. Other words, like *google* and *photoshop*, are included in *MW* as lowercased terms. When in doubt, look it up.

CMOS recommends the use of generic terms when available.

Coca-Cola / cola
Levi's / jeans
Post-it Note / sticky note

However, when using the brand names, the trademark symbols are not necessary and should be omitted wherever possible.

Headline-style capitalization. *CMOS* 8.159–161, *CWMS* pp. 88–89

Proofreaders must check all titles, subtitles, headings, and subheadings for proper capitalization and consistency. This includes checking the table of contents against the chapter titles on each page.

1. Capitalize the first and last words and all major words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and *some* conjunctions).
2. Capitalize the first word following a colon or dash.
3. Lowercase articles (*the, a, an*).
4. Lowercase prepositions unless used adverbially or adjectivally.
5. Lowercase common coordinating conjunctions (*and, for, but, or, nor*)

Italics & Quotation Marks

CMOS 8.163; *CWMS* pp. 215–216, 324–325

Use italics for large works that can be subdivided into smaller components (book titles, play or movie titles, and names of newspapers and magazines).

Use quotation marks for stand-alone components (chapter or section titles, short story titles, song titles, articles, and poems).

Italics are also used for emphasis. See *CMOS* 7.50. *Do not* use bold, underline, or all caps.

Numbers

CMOS 9.1–52, *CWMS* p. 253–256

Spell out the following:

- All whole numbers one through one hundred
- All numbers when referring to someone's age
- All round numbers (hundreds, thousands, etc.)
- Any number that comes at the beginning of a sentence
- Times of day in even, half, and quarter hours (Use numerals when you want to emphasize the exact time.)

If multiple references to numbers appear in the same paragraph, and they all apply to the same item, you may treat them all alike to simplify the reader's comprehension.

If multiple numbers are used to identify different items within a sentence or paragraph, use numerals or words as appropriate in each instance.

However, use numerals when expressing percentages, like 20 percent (not twenty percent).

Quoting Other Sources

Accuracy. *CMOS* 13.6–8; *CWMS* pp. 236, 326–336

All direct quotations (including Scripture verses) must be reprinted *exactly* as in the original, not only the wording but also the spelling, capitalization, and internal punctuation of the original.

Note the following exceptions:

1. Single quotation marks may be changed to double, and double to single, as the situation warrants.
2. Hyphens and en dashes may be changed to em dashes as appropriate. Hyphens may be changed to en dashes for number ranges. The spaces on both sides may be deleted.
3. The initial letter may be changed to a capital or a lowercase letter (depending on whether the quote makes a complete thought).
4. The final period may be omitted or changed to a comma, and punctuation marks may be omitted where ellipsis points are used.
5. Commas or periods outside the closing quotation mark may be moved inside.
6. Note reference marks from the original passage may be deleted or new ones may be added as appropriate.
7. In a passage quoted from a modern book, journal, or newspaper, obvious typographical errors and inadvertent grammar problems may be corrected. (Leave archaic spellings the same.)
8. Words that are italicized in Scripture should not be italicized when quoted.
9. The words *Lord* and *God* need not be written in cap-and-small-cap style (*LORD* and *GOD*), even if printed that way in the original text. Note the *CWMS* exceptions below.*
10. The King James Version capitalizes the first letter of the first word of each verse, regardless of whether the word begins a new sentence or not. Do not follow this when quoting the KJV. Capitalize only proper names, the first word of a sentence, and the first word of what is meant to be a direct quotation. Note the *CWMS* exceptions below.**

*On page 334, *CWMS* says for general nonfiction and fiction, “this cap-and-small-cap style need not be followed.” But retain them for academic materials. Nonacademic use is based on the author's and publisher's preference. See page 511. Some translations (like NASB) use cap-and-small-cap style for Old Testament quotations, which should not be retained (page 335).

**Run-in quotes do not retain this capitalization. However, see page 336 regarding poetry and its exceptions. All quotations set in block style should retain the formatting of poetry lines, indentation, and capitalization as set in the translation quoted.

When a quotation has a misspelled or misused word that must remain in the original quotation, use the Latin word *sic* to call attention to the known mistake. The word should be italicized and set in brackets like [*sic*]. See *CMOS* 13.61.

Books of the Bible. *CWMS* pp. 331

Use arabic (regular) numerals instead of roman numerals for books of the Bible.

2 Timothy 1:7 (not II Timothy 1:7)

When the name of the book begins the sentence, spell out the number.

“First Corinthians has one of my favorite verses about peace.”

Names of the books of the Bible should be spelled out in most cases. See *CWMS* pp. 21–24 for more details. If using abbreviations, determine which style to use. Be consistent with how books are referenced, either spelled out or abbreviated.

Quoting Scripture. *CWMS* pp. 236, 330–336

Run-in quotations and block quotations are formatted differently. However, both use full caps to cite the translation. Do not use small caps. Do not include a comma between the reference and the version abbreviation.

Note: Other sections in this lesson explain the use of periods and quotation marks. This provides more details that are specific to Scripture.

Block quotations should be done with a 0.5” indent on the left side. The right side can remain as is or can also be indented by 0.5” (depending on the publisher’s guidelines).

Block quotations do not need quotation marks at the beginning or end unless they are a part of the actual quoted verses. Cite the reference directly after the passage in parentheses with no punctuation after it.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1–6 NIV)

See *CWMS* page 336 regarding how to set Scripture as poetry:

A gentle answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1 NASB)

Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:
“These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.” (Matthew 15:7–8 NKJV)

Run-in quotations should naturally flow in the text (no indent) and must have quotation marks at the beginning and end of the verse(s). Do not include ending punctuation after the last verse other than the ending quotation mark *unless* the actual verse includes a question mark or an exclamation point, which should go inside the quotes. Then cite the reference directly after the passage in parentheses and include the proper punctuation after the ending parenthesis, usually a period.

Her favorite verse is “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 TLB).

The Bible says, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him’” (John 14:23 NASB).

Psalms 56:8 (NLT) says God records our tears: “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.”

Proverbs says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (22:6 NKJV).

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Lesson 2 Assignment and Quiz

It’s that time again—to put it all into practice. Remember to *turn off* the automatic spellchecker and grammar checker in Microsoft Word prior to opening the document. Then use Track Changes and Comments to complete it.

In order to receive a Certificate of Completion, you must complete at least one homework assignment *and one quiz* per lesson. Some students choose to do all of them for more practice, which is highly recommended but not required.