

## YES! IDIOMAS – GRUPO ACTION

### FINAL WRITTEN EXAM – 2020.1

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NÍVEL: **ADVANCED 2 – EFFECTIVE WRITING**

#### - PUNCTUATION MARKS

There are 14 punctuation marks that are commonly used in English grammar. They are the period, question mark, exclamation point, comma, semicolon, colon, dash, hyphen, parentheses, brackets, braces, apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipsis. Following their correct usage will make your writing easier to read and more appealing. Let's check the most commonly used ones.

Three of the fourteen punctuation marks are appropriate for use as sentence endings. They are the **period**, **question mark**, and **exclamation point**.

The **period** (.) is placed at the end of declarative sentences, statements thought to be complete and after many abbreviations.

- As a sentence ender: *Jane and Jack went to the market.*
- After an abbreviation: *Her son, John Jones Jr., was born on Dec. 6, 2008.*

Use a **question mark** (?) to indicate a direct question when placed at the end of a sentence.

- *When did Jane leave for the market?*

The **exclamation point** (!) is used when a person wants to express a sudden outcry or add emphasis.

- Within dialogue: *"Holy cow!" screamed Jane.*
- To emphasize a point: *My mother-in-law's rants make me furious!*

#### Comma, Semicolon, and Colon

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The comma, semicolon, and colon are often misused because they all can indicate a pause in a series.

The **comma** is used to show a separation of ideas or elements within the structure of a sentence.

Additionally, it is used in numbers, dates, and letter writing after the salutation and closing.

- Direct address: *Thanks for all your help, John.*
- Separation of two complete sentences: *We went to the movies, and then we went out to lunch.*
- Separating lists or elements within sentences: *Suzi wanted the black, green, and blue dress.*

The **semicolon** (;) is used to connect independent clauses. It shows a closer relationship between the clauses than a period would show.

- *John was hurt; he knew she only said it to upset him.*

A **colon** (:) has three main uses. The first is after a word introducing a quotation, an explanation, an example, or a series.

- *He was planning to study four subjects: politics, philosophy, sociology, and economics.*

The second is between independent clauses when the second explains the first, similar to a semicolon:

- *I didn't have time to get changed: I was already late.*

The third use of a colon is for emphasis:

- *There was one thing she loved more than any other: her dog.*

A colon also has non-grammatical uses in time, ratio, business correspondence and references.

## Dash and the Hyphen

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Two other common punctuation marks are the dash and hyphen. These marks are often confused with each other due to their appearance but they are very different.

A **dash** is used to separate words into statements. There are two common types of dashes: en dash and em dash.

- En dash: Twice as long as a hyphen, the en dash is a symbol (--) that is used in writing or printing to indicate a range, connections or differentiations, such as 1880-1945 or Princeton-New York trains.
- Em dash: Longer than the en dash, the em dash can be used in place of a comma, parenthesis, or colon to enhance readability or emphasize the conclusion of a sentence. For example, *She gave him her answer --- No!*

Whether you put spaces around the em dash or not is a style choice. Just be consistent.

A **hyphen** is used to join two or more words together into a compound term and is not separated by spaces. For example, part-time, back-to-back, well-known.

## Apostrophe, Quotation Marks and Ellipsis

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The final three punctuation forms in English grammar are the apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipsis. Unlike previously mentioned grammatical marks, they are not related to one another in any form.

An **apostrophe** (') is used to indicate the omission of a letter or letters from a word, the possessive case, or the plurals of lowercase letters. Examples of the apostrophe in use include:

- Omission of letters from a word: *I've seen that movie several times. She wasn't the only one who knew the answer.*
- Possessive case: *Sara's dog bit the neighbor.*
- Plural for lowercase letters: *Six people were told to mind their p's and q's.*

It should be noted that, according to Purdue University, some teachers and editors enlarge the scope of the use of apostrophes, and prefer their use on symbols (&'s), numbers (7's) and capitalized letters (Q&A's), even though they are not necessary.

**Quotations marks** (" ") are a pair of punctuation marks used primarily to mark the beginning and end of a passage attributed to another and repeated word for word. They are also used to indicate meanings and to indicate the unusual or dubious status of a word.

- *"Don't go outside," she said.*

Single quotation marks ( ' ') are used most frequently for quotes within quotes.

### - TOPIC SENTENCES

The topic sentence is a sentence that is used at the beginning of a paragraph to tell the reader what it is that you are going to be talking about in that paragraph. It is important because it leads the reader into the points that you are trying to make, without leaving them confused. It also helps to prevent any miscommunication on your part.

There are a few qualities that make for a good topic sentence:

- **Brevity:** Long, rambling sentences can be confusing. Don't pack your topic sentence too full of details. That's what the rest of the paragraph is for.
- **Clarity:** Likewise, don't beat around the bush. Say exactly what you want to say. Try not to engage in wordplay and don't speak in vague terms.
- **Precision:** Don't be too broad when introducing the topic that you're going to discuss. Not only is that a bland approach, it is also unhelpful to readers.

On the other hand, there are a few things that make for a bad topic sentence. Be sure that you aren't using these kinds of sentences to introduce your paragraphs, as they are unhelpful to readers and do little to help you get your point across.

- Don't use facts as topic sentences. Remember, you are using the topic sentence to introduce a point you are trying to make, or your opinion.
- Don't just talk about the "what" – talk about the "why" as well. That is, don't just think about the effect, but it's cause.
- Don't say "I am going to tell you..." or "I am going to speak about..." when introducing a topic.

The differences between good and bad topic sentences can be seen in the examples below:

**Bad:** Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809.

Why isn't this a good topic sentence? First and foremost, it tells the reader very little about what you are going to say. Not only that, but you are not using this valuable space in your paragraph to make a real point.

**Good:** Abraham Lincoln, born in 1809, was one of the most influential politicians in history.

With this topic sentence, you are making a strong point, which you will ideally back up with plenty of facts and good information. The reader also knows what to expect when you use this kind of statement.