Lesson 10

Punctuation to Indicate a Pause or Break

Introduction

Sometimes in your writing, you will want to signal a pause. The pause may be in the middle of a sentence or at the end of it. You can use commas, dashes, or ellipses to cue different types of pauses.

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<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>When to Use</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<td>Commas</td>
<td>to set off nonessential information</td>
<td>Professional sports, such as football and basketball, can be more fun to watch live than on TV. Yesterday's game was thrilling, especially at the end.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dashes</td>
<td>to indicate a change in thought or an abrupt break, or to emphasize set-off text</td>
<td>Some people think baseball is boring—nine innings of players standing around. The batter swung and—with the crack of his bat—knocked the ball out of the park.</td>
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<td>Ellipses</td>
<td>to indicate an unfinished action or the process of thinking</td>
<td>With two seconds left on the clock, the player dribbled down the court . . . slam dunk!</td>
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Guided Practice

Add the type of punctuation shown in parentheses to correctly signal the pause in each sentence. Use a caret (\) to add dashes and ellipses.

Hint

When you use commas or dashes to signal a pause in the middle of a sentence, be sure to use the same punctuation before and after the pause.

Example:

Camella—that girl over there—plays hockey.
NOT
Camella, that girl over there—plays hockey.

1. Did you see the game between the Hornets and the Grizzlies the one that went into overtime? (comma)
2. Suddenly the referee blew his whistle stopping the game for a penalty. (ellipsis)
3. A professional athlete runs the risk of serious injury a disaster that could even end a career. (dash)
4. Our softball team has a game next Thursday not Friday. (comma)
5. Curtis a newcomer to our team usually scores the most runs. (dashes)
6. At 6:00 A.M. a time when most people are asleep Curtis and his brother are out practicing. (commas)
7. My mom says I can go to the game if I accomplish one thing an A on my algebra test. (dash)
8. Stepping up to the plate he keenly focused his eyes on the pitcher. (ellipsis)
For numbers 1–5, choose the best way to punctuate the pause in each sentence.

1. A  The ball slowly rolled around the rim and finally, dropped through the hoop.
   B  The ball slowly rolled, around the rim, and finally dropped through the hoop.
   C  The ball slowly rolled . . . around the rim and finally dropped through the hoop.
   D  The ball slowly rolled around the rim . . . and finally dropped through the hoop.

2. A  That tennis ball is flying toward you—watch out!
   B  That tennis ball is—flying toward you watch out!
   C  That tennis ball is flying toward you, watch out!
   D  That tennis ball is—flying toward you—watch out!

3. A  The score after six innings—if she remembered correctly was 4 to 1.
   B  The score after six innings if she remembered correctly, was 4 to 1.
   C  The score after six innings . . . if she remembered correctly was 4 to 1.
   D  The score after six innings, if she remembered correctly, was 4 to 1.

4. A  Let’s get something to eat, maybe popcorn or nachos—at halftime.
   B  Let’s get something to eat—maybe popcorn or nachos—at halftime.
   C  Let’s get something to eat maybe popcorn or nachos, at halftime.
   D  Let’s get something to eat—maybe popcorn or nachos, at halftime.

5. A  Competing in the Olympics, what an amazing experience, that would be.
   B  Competing in the Olympics . . . what an amazing experience, that would be.
   C  Competing in the Olympics . . . what an amazing experience that would be.
   D  Competing in the Olympics—what an amazing experience—that would be.