APPENDIX

Principles of Punctuation Presented Plainly

From:

As a rule, however, do not use exclamations in scientific writing. Of course, if you discover a new planet or a cure for the common cold, you are entitled to say:

Eureka!

**Comma**

Use a comma after an introductory word (often an adverb) in a sentence.

Fortunately, this is sound advice.

Use a comma after any introductory phrase.

On the whole, this is sound advice.

To write well, you should follow this advice.

Use a comma at the end of a dependent clause that precedes the independent clause.

If you write well, your readers will bless you.

Use a comma and one of the seven coordinating conjunctions (and, or, but, for, nor, so, yet) as one way to separate the two independent clauses in a compound sentence.

This is a good rule, and your readers will bless you for using it.

Use a comma after a coordinating conjunction separating two independent clauses.

This is a good rule; however, it is not easy to follow.

Use two commas to set off appositive or interrupting words within a clause or sentence.

The Director of the laboratory, Dr. Smith, is a good egg.

Mars, named after the Roman god of war, is conspicuous for its red color.

Use a comma before the “and” or “or” in a series of three or more items, and of course use commas between the other items in the series.

I like apples, oranges, and pears.

Use the right word, phrase, or clause.

**Semicolon**

A semicolon can be used to splice together two independent clauses.

I kissed her in a private place; we were behind a tree.

Bell invented the phonograph; he also invented the telephone.

A semicolon and a coordinating adverb (such words as therefore, however, moreover, and nevertheless) may be used to link together two independent clauses.

This face rings a bell; however, it is not Bell’s bell that rings.

Semicolons can be used to separate a series when one or more parts of the series already contain commas. (Note that a semicolon should precede the “and” in the series, just as a comma precedes the “and” in the usual series.)

He gave small bells to Bell, the inventor; middle-size bells to Gram, the painter; and large bells to Ringer, a dead ringer for Bell.

**Colon**

A colon is used to introduce a word, phrase, or clause.

Perhaps you have guessed my favorite brand of Scotch: Bells.

I know where to go to get it: to the bar.

When I get it, I might say something like the following: “Bell’s Bells, and here’s mud in your eye.”
Dash

Dashes should be used rarely in scientific writing. Commas or parentheses are usually preferable. A dash might be appropriate if a real contrast or surprise is intended.

My new physician is an odd duck—I have heard that he is a quack.

Quotation Marks

Periods and commas go inside closing quote marks.

“What is his name,” she asked. He said, “I am Dr. Quackinabush.”

Semicolons and colons go outside closing quote marks.

“Ring the bell”; when he heard those words, he went home.

“Ring it again”; those were his words.

Question marks and exclamation points go either outside or inside closing quote marks. They go inside the quotation marks if the quoted person is asking or exclaiming.

She asked, “May I have a large Bells?”

“Absolutely!” said the publican.

If it is the narrator who is asking or exclaiming, the question marks or exclamation points go outside.

Did she say, “I want a large Bells?”

I was amazed when she said, “I want a large Bells!”

If both the narrator and the person being quoted are asking or exclaiming, the marks go inside.

Did she say, “May I have Absolut vodka, please?”

His quick response was, “Absolutely!”

Or, if the question mark or exclamation point appears in the middle of a sentence (which they can do, unlike the period), the mark goes inside the quotation marks.

“You have farted in front of my wife!” begins the old gag. It goes on: “Sorry, old chap, I didn’t know it was her turn.”

Apostrophe

To show possession, add an apostrophe and an “s” to a singular noun.

This book is the cat’s meow.

Appendix 1: Principles of Punctuation Presented Plainly

To a plural already ending in “s,” simply add an apostrophe.

The scientists’ experiments were completed.

To a plural not ending in “s,” add an apostrophe and an “s.”

The deer’s habits are interesting.

To names, add an apostrophe and an “s.”

Day’s Rule
Jones’s Rule
Weiss’s Rule

Parentheses

A full sentence within parentheses should start with a capital letter and end with a period; the period should be inside the closing parenthesis mark.

(i hope you like this rule.)

If the material within parentheses is not a full sentence, any needed comma or period should be placed outside the closing parenthesis mark.

When you have mastered these rules (punctuational pointers), you will write more confidently.

When you have mastered these rules, you will write more confidently (as a rule).

Brackets

Use brackets to enclose any alteration or addition to quoted material.

“She [the wife of Alexander Graham Bell] was also fond of Bells,” he said.

Slash

Do not use slashes in scientific (or any other) writing, except to indicate division.

10/5 = 2

Hyphen

When two words jointly modify a third, the two should be linked with a hyphen.

This is a first-rate book.