

# Punctuation for Effect

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_ / 10



## Quick Review

Punctuation shapes how a sentence FEELS. A **dash** (—) creates an abrupt, dramatic break. An **ellipsis** (...) shows lingering, trailing-off thought or stretched suspense. An **exclamation point** (!) shows strong feeling. **Commas** add neutral pauses; **parentheses** ( ) add quiet, whispered extra info. Each mark is a tool with its own shade.

## PRACTICE

Choose the punctuation that best creates the specific effect described. All four options are real punctuation choices that an author could use; only one creates the exact shade.

1. Which punctuation creates the most LINGERING SUSPENSE, as if the reader has to wait?  
I opened the box, and inside was \_\_\_\_\_ a note.

- A. ...
- B. —
- C. ,
- D. !

2. Which version shows the STRONGEST burst of surprise?

- A. I won the contest, finally.
- B. I won the contest.
- C. I won the contest...
- D. I won the contest!

3. Which sentence uses a DASH to add EMPHASIS to the extra info?

- A. My sister, who is only ten, painted that mural.
- B. My sister—who is only ten—painted that mural.
- C. My sister (who is only ten) painted that mural.
- D. My sister: who is only ten, painted that mural.

4. Which version makes the extra info feel QUIET, like a side note?

Our dog Max \_\_\_\_\_ chases every squirrel he sees.

- A. —a small terrier—
- B. (a small terrier)
- C. , a small terrier,
- D. : a small terrier,



5. Which punctuation creates the BEST sharp dramatic pause before a surprise?

*I peeked under the bed and saw \_\_\_\_\_ two glowing eyes!*

- A. ,
- B. ;
- C. —
- D. ...

6. Which version shows thoughts TRAILING OFF, as if the speaker is daydreaming?

- A. I wonder if it will rain...
- B. I wonder if it will rain.
- C. I wonder if it will rain!
- D. I wonder if it will rain—

7. Choose the version that shows STRONG EXCITEMENT.

- A. We are going to the beach.
- B. We are going to the beach (finally).
- C. We are going to the beach—
- D. We are going to the beach!

8. Which punctuation BEST shows a sudden change of thought?

*I was going to call you \_\_\_\_\_ but my phone died.*

- A. ,
- B. ;
- C. —
- D. ...

9. Which version uses COMMAS correctly for gentle, neutral extra info?

- A. My friend Sara—who lives next door—came over.
- B. My friend Sara, who lives next door, came over.
- C. My friend Sara (who lives next door) came over.
- D. My friend Sara who lives next door came over.

10. Which punctuation STRETCHES the moment for the longest dramatic pause?

*And the winner is \_\_\_\_\_ Jordan!*

- A. ,
- B. .
- C. —
- D. ...



## Answer Keys

- 1  A  B  C  D
- 2  A  B  C  D
- 3  A  B  C  D
- 4  A  B  C  D
- 5  A  B  C  D

- 6  A  B  C  D
- 7  A  B  C  D
- 8  A  B  C  D
- 9  A  B  C  D
- 10  A  B  C  D

### Explanations

<b>1. A</b>	All four punctuate the sentence sensibly. <b>Ellipsis (...)</b> stretches time and makes the reader wait — the heart of lingering suspense. <i>Dash (—)</i> creates a sharp surprise, not a slow build; the <i>comma</i> is neutral; <i>exclamation point</i> shows excitement once the secret is out, not the wait.
<b>2. D</b>	All four are correctly punctuated. <b>!</b> = strong, immediate feeling. The period is flat; the ellipsis shows uncertainty or trailing off (not surprise); the comma + <i>finally</i> shows relief, not surprise.
<b>3. B</b>	All four set off the same extra info with different marks. <b>Dashes</b> shout the extra info — they emphasize. <i>Commas</i> are neutral; <i>parentheses</i> whisper; the <i>colon</i> in D is incorrect usage here.
<b>4. B</b>	All set off the same info with different marks. <b>Parentheses</b> whisper a side note. <i>Dashes</i> shout/emphasize; <i>commas</i> are neutral; the <i>colon</i> is wrong usage and would suggest a list or explanation.
<b>5. C</b>	All four mark a pause. <b>Dash (—)</b> = sharp, sudden break before a punch — a dramatic pause. The <i>comma</i> is too mild; the <i>semicolon</i> joins equal clauses and feels formal/awkward here; the <i>ellipsis</i> stretches and lingers (slow suspense) but is less SHARP.
<b>6. A</b>	<b>Ellipsis (...)</b> = thoughts trailing off into silence. The <i>period</i> closes the thought firmly; the <i>exclamation point</i> adds feeling (wrong mood); the <i>dash</i> suggests an interruption, not a slow fade.
<b>7. D</b>	<b>!</b> = strong feeling. The <i>period</i> is flat; the <i>parentheses</i> add quiet side-info (wrong tone); the <i>dash</i> suggests the sentence is about to continue, not finish in excitement.
<b>8. C</b>	All four are punctuation marks that could join the two parts. <b>Dash</b> signals an abrupt break or shift. The <i>comma</i> is mild and flat; the <i>semicolon</i> joins equal ideas formally (no surprise); the <i>ellipsis</i> trails off slowly rather than snapping.
<b>9. B</b>	All set off (or fail to set off) the same extra info. <b>Commas</b> add a gentle, neutral pause. <i>Dashes</i> emphasize; <i>parentheses</i> whisper; D leaves out punctuation entirely (and the meaning becomes restrictive, not extra).
<b>10. D</b>	<b>Ellipsis (...)</b> visibly stretches the pause for the longest hold. The <i>dash</i> creates a sharp, quick break (less stretch); the <i>comma</i> is too brief; a <i>period</i> would end the sentence before the name.



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