

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

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| 1. A | All four punctuate the sentence sensibly. Ellipsis (...) 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. |
| 2. D | All four are correctly punctuated. ! = 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. |
| 3. B | All four set off the same extra info with different marks. Dashes 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. |
| 4. B | All set off the same info with different marks. Parentheses 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. |
| 5. C | All four mark a pause. Dash (—) = 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. |
| 6. A | Ellipsis (...) = 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. |
| 7. D | ! = 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. |
| 8. C | All four are punctuation marks that could join the two parts. Dash 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. |
| 9. B | All set off (or fail to set off) the same extra info. Commas 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). |
| 10. D | Ellipsis (...) 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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