Speakout Elementary

BASIC RULES OF PUNCTUATION AND CAPITAL LETTERS

The purpose of punctuation is <u>to make meaning clear</u>.

♔ Capital letters
We use capital letters:
1. At the beginning of a new sentence:
   They want to emigrate.
2. At the beginning of direct speech:
   She asked me, 'How are you?'
3. For proper names, including personal names:
   Madrid, Chicago, Holland, James Rice, Helen Grey.
4. For nationalities and languages:
   I'm learning French.
   I think / Brazilians are very spontaneous.
   They're Swedish.
5. For days and months:
   Monday, September
6. For the word I.

♔ Apostrophe
The apostrophe has two main uses:
1. To show contracted verbs:
   I'm watching it.
   She's been crying.
   I'd like some ice cream.
2. To show possession:
   Darren's house, the Smiths' car

Watch out!
   a) If the noun is plural and ends in s, add the apostrophe after it.
      the Smiths' car
   b) It's is a contracted verb form only. It can never indicate possession:
      It's too late to cancel.
      I want to learn about London and its history.

♔ Comma
The role of the comma is to group words that go together and separate words that do not go together, in order to make the meaning of sentences clear. We usually use a comma where we would make a pause when we speak.

Uses
1. Before conjunctions (and, but, or, etc.) that separate clauses, not individual words:
   He likes speaking German, but he doesn't speak it very well.
   There are no women or children here. (no comma)
2. To introduce direct speech:
   Ben said, 'Do you like working here?'
3. To indicate contrast or balance:
   He was happy, but tired.

4 To separate words / phrases that are not part of the main statement (two commas are needed):
Sandra, however, is not her real name.

5 To separate non-defining relative clauses:
Marta, who's Spanish, has relatives in Boston.

6 After adverbs and adverbial phrases at the beginning of a sentence:
Slowly, she walked up the hill.

7 To list items:
I've visited Rome, Frankfurt, Madrid and Lisbon.
We don't usually put a comma before the word *and* when it introduces the last item in the list.

8 To separate adjectives that refer to the same concept:
an ugly, unpleasant city
But we do not use commas to separate adjectives that refer to different concepts:
a big red car

9 To separate thousands and millions in figures:
1,345
30,395
5,234,402

🏰 Full stop

The main use of the full stop is to mark the end of a sentence that is a statement.
He's been living in London for three years.

Full stops are also used to indicate decimal points:
8.37€
0.37%

🏰 Question mark

The main use of a question mark is to indicate a direct question:
Are you coming tonight?

We also use a question mark in tag questions:
You're coming tonight, aren't you?

We do not use a question mark in indirect questions:
He wants to know if you're coming tonight.

🏰 Exclamation mark

We use an exclamation mark:
1 To express a strong emotion:
What a pity!
I'm so happy!
What a great book!

2 To give a command or warning:
Look out!
Listen!

3 To call someone:
Hey, Tom!
Taxi!

🏰 Colon

We use a colon to introduce a list or explanation:
I've bought some food: six tomatoes, some butter and a pint of milk.

🏰 Quotation marks with direct speech

1 When the closing quotation mark comes at the end of a sentence, the full stop / question mark / exclamation mark at the end of the quotation comes inside the quotation marks and completes the sentence:
Philip said, 'I like eating here.'
Jason asked, 'What are you doing?'

2 When the closing quotation mark does not come at the end of a sentence, a full stop at the end of the quotation is not allowed: it is replaced by a comma immediately before the closing quotation mark. An exclamation mark or a question mark at the end of the quotation is kept.
'I like living here,' Kate said.
'What are you doing?' Sally asked.

Common mistakes

1. A comma **cannot** separate subject from predicate. The following sentences are not possible:
2. Una coma no puede separar el sujeto (quien realiza la acción del verbo).

   *My friend Maria, is a teacher **WRONG**

   My friend Maria is a teacher **RIGHT**

3. A comma cannot be used to join grammatically separate sentences unless the coordinating conjunction **AND is present** . The following sentences are not possible :

   Una coma no puede usarse para unir gramaticalmente oraciones independientes que cada una tiene su sujeto y verbo al no ser que la conjunción AND esté present.

   *London is a very cosmopolitan city, there are a lot of people living there   **WRONG**

   * London is a very cosmopolitan city.There are a lot of people living there   **RIGHT**

   * London is a very cosmopolitan city and there are lot of people living there. **RIGHT**