

Full Stops: Keep It Simple

The Craft of Writing · By Simon Townsend · 2 min read

The fullstop

I thought you might benefit from some information on the fullstop (or periods or dot, as the Americans call it).

Also you might like to know about the "three fullstops" or ellipsis as it's more correctly known.

So let me pass on the following information from the excellent website "Grammar Book". You can access it on www.grammarbook.com.

The following is excellent advice.

But always remember to learn the style of your target publication by reading it.

Rule 1

Use the period after an indirect question.

Example He asked where his suitcase was.

Rule 2

If words are omitted at the end of a quoted sentence, use ellipses (three spaced periods, with one space before and after each period) followed by the necessary ending punctuation mark.

Examples The regulation states, "All agencies must document overtime" The original sentence read, "The regulation states, "All agencies must document overtime or risk losing federal funds." She said, "Can you tell me what happened to . . . ?"

Rule 3

If sentences are omitted between other sentences within a quotation, use three spaced periods after the ending punctuation mark of the preceding sentence.

Example The regulation states, "Agencies may risk losing federal funds All agencies will be audited annually." NOTE: Two spaces follow the ending punctuation mark.

Rule 4

If the last word in the sentence ends in a period, do not follow it with another period.

Examples I know that M.D. She is my sister-in-law.

Please shop, cook, etc. I will do the laundry.

?

Rule 5

Don't use fullstops if not needed.

The style in journalism today is to do without fullstops, such as:

Dr NSW PhD USA Dept km am

Mr Vic BA UK Pty Ltd g pm

Mrs ACT BSc Anzac (not A.N.Z.A.C) kg

The ellipsis: 3 fullstops

An ellipsis is three fullstops or dots, like this . . .

It's not four or five dots or a great string of them.

The ellipsis is a punctuation mark.

But it's NOT a substitute for a comma, dash or fullstop.

An ellipsis has three different uses.

1. Primarily an ellipsis indicates words have been left out, usually left out of a quote.
2. An ellipsis can indicate suspense, such as: "And the winner is . . . Sydney."
3. An ellipsis can indicate a speaker trailing-off his sentence: "Well, I suppose, so but I, well I . . ."

To make an ellipsis, you put a space after the last word, then a dot, then a space, second dot, space, third dot and another space before the next word.

Not this? but this . . .

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