

Name: _____ Date: _____

Answer Key: Precise Punctuation: Polishing Powerful Prose for Ninth Grade

Identify core mechanics and conventions using contemporary literary snippets and technical writing scenarios to improve syntactic clarity.

1. Which sentence correctly uses an apostrophe to show possession for a plural noun ending in 's'?

Answer: B) The three musicians' instruments were left on the stage.

For plural nouns ending in 's', the possessive is formed by adding only an apostrophe after the final letter.

2. Choose the correct punctuation to complete the following sentence: 'The space shuttle launched at dawn ___ however, the weather remained unpredictable.'

Answer: C) ; (semicolon)

A semicolon is used to connect two independent clauses linked by a conjunctive adverb like 'however'.

3. True or False: In a list of three or more items, the comma following the penultimate item (the Oxford Comma) is grammatically required by all style guides.

Answer: B) False

While often recommended for clarity, the Oxford Comma is a style choice; some guides like AP Style generally omit it unless necessary for meaning.

4. Which of the following sentences uses quotation marks correctly for a title of a short work?

Answer: B) I just finished reading the famous short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson.

Titles of short stories, poems, and articles should be enclosed in double quotation marks.

5. Complete this sentence with the right punctuation: 'The chef needed four ingredients ___ sea salt, rosemary, garlic, and olive oil.'

Answer: C) : (colon)

A colon is used to introduce a list following a complete independent clause.

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6. True or False: A period should always be placed inside the closing quotation mark at the end of a sentence in American English.

Answer: A) True

In standard American English, periods and commas are placed inside quotation marks.

7. Identify the sentence that correctly uses a comma to set off an introductory phrase.

Answer: B) Under the old oak tree, the dog buried its bone.

Introductory prepositional phrases are typically followed by a comma to help the reader distinguish where the introduction ends and the main clause begins.

8. Which option fixes the contraction in this sentence? '___ going to be a long flight to Tokyo.'

Answer: C) It's

'It's' is the contraction for 'It is', whereas 'its' is the possessive form.

9. Which sentence correctly punctuates a direct quote that is split by an attribution?

Answer: A) "The game is over," the coach said, "it is time to go home."

Commas are used to separate the quotation from the attribution, and in American English, the comma goes inside the quotation marks.

10. True or False: The following sentence is correctly punctuated: 'I love to study chemistry, it is my favorite subject.'

Answer: B) False

This is a comma splice. Two independent clauses should be joined by a semicolon, a period, or a comma with a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS).