

Capitalization and Punctuation Rules

TN Language Arts Checks for Understanding

0601.1.3

0601.1.4

0701.1.3

0701.1.4

0801.1.3

0801.1.4

These rules should be copied or taped into student language arts handbook.

- C1: Capitalize the first word of a quoted sentence.
- C2: Capitalize a proper noun.
- C3: Capitalize a person's title when it precedes the name. Do not capitalize when the title is acting as a description following the name.
- C4: Capitalize the titles of high-ranking government officials when used before their names. Do not capitalize the civil title if it is used instead of the name.
- C5: Capitalize any title when used as a direct address.
- C6: Capitalize points of the compass only when they refer to specific regions.
- C7: Always capitalize the first and last words of titles of publications regardless of their parts of speech. Capitalize other important words within titles, including the short verb forms *Is*, *Are*, and *Be*.
- C8: Do not capitalize names of seasons.
- C9: Capitalize the first word of a salutation and the first word of a complimentary close.
- C10: Capitalize words derived from proper nouns.
- C11: Capitalize the names of specific course titles when followed by a number. Names of languages are always capitalized.
- C12: After a sentence ending with a colon, do not capitalize the first word if it begins a list.
- P1: Use a period at the end of a complete sentence that is a statement.
- P2: If the last word in the sentence ends in a period, do not follow it with another period.
- P3: Use commas to separate words and word groups with a series of three or more.
- P4: Use a comma to separate two adjectives when the word *and* can be inserted between them.
- P5: Use commas before or surrounding the name or title of a person directly addressed.
- P6: Use a comma to separate the day of the month from the year and after the year if the sentence continues after the year.
- P7: If any part of the date is omitted, leave out the comma.
- P8: Use a comma to separate the city from the state and after the state in a document. If you use the two-letter capitalized form of a state in a document, you do not need a comma after the state.

- P9: Use commas to surround degrees or titles used with names. Commas are no longer required around *Jr.* and *Sr.* Commas never set off *II, III.*
- P10: Use commas to set off expressions that interrupt sentence flow.
- P11: Use a comma after phrases of more than three words that begin a sentence. If the phrase has fewer than three words, the comma is optional.
- P12: Use a comma before a conjunction that joins two independent clauses.
- P13: Use commas to set off direct quotations.
- P14: Use a comma when beginning sentences with introductory words such as *well, now, or yes.*
- P15: Use commas surrounding words such as *therefore* and *however.*
- P16: Use a semicolon in place of a period to separate two sentences where the conjunction has been left out.
- P17: It is preferable to use a semicolon before introductory words such as *namely, however, therefore, that is, i.e., for example, e.g., or for instance* when they introduce a complete sentence.
- P18: Use the semicolon to separate units of a series when one or more of the units contain commas.
- P19: Use the semicolon between two sentences joined by a coordinating conjunction when one or more commas appear in the first sentence.
- P20: Use the colon after a complete sentence to introduce a list of items when introductory words such as *namely, for example, or that is* do not appear.
- P21: Use the colon to follow the salutation of a business letter even when addressing someone by his/her first name. Never use a semicolon after a salutation. A comma is used after the salutation for a friendly letter.
- P22: Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks, even inside single quotes.
- P23: The placement of question marks with quotes follows logic. If a question is in quotation marks, the question mark should be placed inside the quotation marks.
- P24: Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.
- P25: Use quotation marks to set off a direct quote.
- P26: Use the apostrophe with contractions. The apostrophe is always placed at the spot where the letter(s) has been removed.
- P27: Use the apostrophe to show possession. Place the apostrophe before the *s* to show singular possession.
- P28: Do not use an apostrophe for the plural of a name.
- P29: Never use an apostrophe with possessive pronouns: *his, hers, its, theirs, ours, yours, whose.* They already show possession so they do not require an apostrophe.
- P30: The only time an apostrophe is used for *it's* is when it is a contraction for *it is* or *it has.*