
PERIODS

The period is the basic symbol used to end a complete thought or statement.

There is no space between the last letter of the final word and the period. Only one space is needed after the period before the beginning of the next sentence. This goes against many writers' idea that there must be two spaces in between sentences; however, two spaces are used with typewriters while only one space is needed when using modern word processors.

- **Use a period at the end of a command.**

Example: *Hand in your papers no later than Friday at noon.
In case of an emergency, exit the building immediately.*

- **Use a period at the end of an indirect question.**

Example: *The professor asked why John was late to class.
She used to wonder why her dog buried his toys.*

- **Use a period with abbreviations.**

Example: *Dr. Smith departed from Washington, D.C., at 8 a.m.*

*Notice that when the period ending the abbreviation comes at the end of a sentence, it will also suffice to end the sentence. On the other hand, when an abbreviation ends a question or exclamation, it is appropriate to add a question mark or exclamation mark after the abbreviation-ending period:

Did you enjoy living in Washington, D.C.?

*Occasionally, a statement will end with a question. When that happens, it is appropriate to end the sentence with a question mark.

Example: *Can we get there faster if we take the interstate?
His question was, can we end this statement with a question mark?*

*Abbreviations we pronounce by spelling out the letters may or may not use periods and you will have to use a dictionary to be sure: FBI, NAACP, NCAA, U.S.A., U.N.I.C.E.F., etc.

- **Use a period with titles before names.**

Example: *Mrs., Mr., Ms., Prof., Dr., Gen., Rep., Sen., Rev., Hon., St. (for Saint)*

*Notice that Miss is not an abbreviation so we don't put a period after it. Ms. is not an abbreviation, either, but we do use a period after it – to keep it consistent with Mr. and Mrs.

- **Use a period with titles after names.**

Example: *Sr., Jr., Ph.D., M.D., B.A., M.A., D.D.S.*

*Note that different reference manuals have different recommendations about using periods with degrees, so use your own judgment on this issue. All sources advise against using titles before *and* after a name at the same time (i.e., Dr. Juanita Espinoza or Juanita Espinoza, Ph.D., but not Dr. Juanita Espinoza, Ph.D.)

- **Use a period when reporting page numbers in citations and references.**

Example: *(Washington, pp. 18-20)*
Sun Sentinel, p. B2

- **Use a period when reporting inches as units of measurement.**

Example: *20 in.*

*Note that other units of measurement, such as 18 km, 20 ft, and 5 m, do not require periods after the abbreviated unit unless they fall at the end of a sentence. A period is required when abbreviating inches as a way of distinguishing the measurement from the preposition “in.” However, only one period is needed if an abbreviated measurement of inches falls at the end of the sentence.

The room was found to be 144 in. by 121 in.