End Punctuation

The punctuation marks that signal the end of a sentence are the period, the question mark and the exclamation mark.

. Period

You use the period, by far the most common of the end punctuation marks, to end a sentence that makes a statement. You may also use periods with imperative sentences that have no sense of urgency or excitement attached:

  I am a student.
  Turn right at the stop sign.
  Bring me a cup of coffee and a cheese danish.

! Exclamation Point

When you want to express a sense of urgency or very strong emotion, you may end your imperative sentences and statements with an exclamation mark:

  Look out below!
  Leave this house at once!
  I hate him!

Exclamation marks are, however, rare in formal writing. Use them sparingly, if at all.

? Question Mark

You should use the question mark at the end of a direct question:

  Who's on first?
  Where is my flowered cape?

Be careful not to use a question mark at the end of an indirect question. Indirect questions are simply statements, and therefore end with a period:

  I wonder who was chosen as Harvest King in the county fair.
  She asked if she could play pinball.
  The teacher asked who was chewing gum.