

FULL STOP MEANING & USAGE

The full stop or the period (.) is the strongest punctuation in the English language.

It appears as a single dot on the bottom line of the text, and it indicates, when used at the end of a sentence, a strong pause. Look at the following examples:

- Let's go there.
- I like this laptop.
- Read this book.
- I will go home.

This is the most common and obvious use of this punctuation mark but it is also used in some other situations.

1. After abbreviations like etc., a.m., p.m.

2. After words like "Goodbye." "All right." "Hi."

- Goodbye. I will see you soon.
- Hi Amit. How are you?
- All right. Let's finish this by Thursday.

3. After titles like Mr., Mrs., Dr. etc.

4. After decimal points like:

- The sales fell by 6.3% this week.
- The share market index rose by 5.1% this quarter.

Question Mark Definition and Examples

A *question mark* (?) is a punctuation symbol placed at the end of a sentence or phrase to indicate a direct question, as in: *She asked, "Are you happy to be home?"* The question mark is also called an *interrogation point*, *note of interrogation*, or *question point*.

To understand the question mark and its use, it's helpful to know that in grammar, a *question* is a type of sentence expressed in a form that requires (or appears to require) an answer. Also known as an interrogative sentence, a question—which ends with a question mark—is generally distinguished from a sentence that makes a statement, delivers a command, or expresses an exclamation.

Purpose

The question mark always indicates a question or doubt, says "Merriam-Webster's Guide to Punctuation and Style," adding that "A question mark ends a direct question." The dictionary gives these examples;

- What went wrong?
- "When do they arrive?"

The question mark is "the least demanding" of punctuation marks, says Rene J. Cappon, author of "The Associated Press Guide to Punctuation," adding: "All you need to know is what a question is and you punctuate accordingly."

Merriam-Webster defines a question as an interrogative expression, often used to test knowledge, as in:

- "Did you go to school today?"

The purpose of the question mark would seem simple, then. "They are direct questions, invariably followed by the interrogation point," says Cappon. But a closer look shows that this seemingly simple punctuation mark can be tricky to use and easy to misuse.

Correct and Incorrect Use

There are a number of cases where using the question mark can be tricky for writers:

Multiple questions: Cappon says that you do use a question mark, even multiple question marks, when you have multiple questions for which you expect an answer or answers, even with sentence fragments such as:

- What were her vacation plans? Beach? Tennis? Reading "War and Peace"? Travel?

Note that the quote marks at the end of "War and Peace" come before the question mark because this punctuation mark is not part of the book's title.

Omit the Comma and Other Punctuation Marks: Harold Rabinowitz and Suzanne Vogel in "The Manual of Scientific Style: A Guide for Authors, Editors, and Researchers," note that a question mark should never be placed next to a comma, nor should it be next to a period unless it is part of an abbreviation. Question marks should not generally be doubled for emphasis or paired with exclamation points.

And "The Associated Press Stylebook, 2018" says that a question mark should never supersede a comma, as in:

" 'Who is there?' she asked."

You would *never* pair a comma and a question mark, neither before nor after quotation marks. In this sentence, the question mark also comes before the quote mark because it ends the interrogative sentence.

Indirect questions: As a general rule, do not use a question mark at the end of an indirect question, a declarative sentence that reports a question and ends with a period rather than a question mark. An example of an indirect question would be: *She asked me if I was happy to be home.* Cappon says that you don't use a question mark when no answer is expected and gives these examples of indirect questions:

“Would you mind closing the window” is framed like a question but probably isn't. The same applies to, “Would you please not bang the door when you leave.”

Gerald J. Alred, Charles T. Brusaw, and Walter E. Oliu in "The Business Writer's Companion," agree, further explaining that you omit the question mark when you "ask" a rhetorical question, essentially a statement for which you do not expect an answer. If your question is a "polite request" for which you simply assume you'll get a positive response— *Can you carry in the groceries, please?*—omit the question mark.

A Question Within an Indirect Question

Using the question mark can become even more difficult, as the Merriam-Webster punctuation guide shows with this example:

- What was her motive? you may be asking.

The sentence itself is an indirect question: The speaker does not expect an answer. But the indirect question contains a question sentence, where the speaker is essentially quoting or announcing the listener's thoughts. Merriam-Webster provides even trickier examples:

- I naturally wondered, Will it really work?
- Thoroughly puzzled, “Who could have done such a thing?” she wondered.

The first sentence is also an indirect question. The speaker (*I*) is quoting his own thoughts, which are in the form of a question. But the speaker does not expect an answer, so this is not an interrogative statement. Merriam-Webster also suggests that you reframe the first sentence above as a simple declarative statement, negating the need for a question mark:

- I naturally wondered whether it would really work.

The second sentence is also an indirect question that contains an interrogative statement. Notice that the question mark comes *before* the quote marks because the interrogative statement—"Who could have done such a thing?"—is a question that requires a question mark.

George Bernard Shaw, in "Back to Methuselah," gives a classic example of indirect questions that also contain interrogative statements (or questions):

"You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?' "

The speaker is making two statements; he does not expect an answer for either. But, within each statement is a question—"Why?" and "Why not?"—both quoting the listener.

Conversational Mark

The question mark is the "most profoundly human" form of punctuation, says Roy Peter Clark, author of "The Glamour of Grammar." This punctuation mark "envisions communication not as assertive but as interactive, even conversational." A question mark at the end of an interrogative statement implicitly recognizes the other person and seeks her views and input.

The question mark is "the engine of debates and interrogations, of mysteries, solved and secrets to be revealed, of conversations between student and teacher, of anticipation and explanation," adds Clark. Used correctly, the question mark can help you engage your reader; it can help draw in your reader as an active partner whose answers you seek and whose opinions matter.