Punctuation is an integral part of writing. The periods, commas, semi-colons, etc, we use everyday are there to aid the reader in comprehending words; they are not intended to replace language. Here are some rules:

**Main Punctuation Marks:** Semi-colon (:), Colon (:), Comma (,), Period (.), Exclamation Point (!), Question Mark (?), Quotation Marks ("), Parentheses ( ), Dashes (--) (---), Apostrophes (’), Ellipses (…)

**Semicolon ( ; )** can be used three ways:

1. Connect two complete sentences that are close in meaning.
   Pattern: *Complete sentence; complete sentence.*
   Example: My eighty-one-year-old grandmother still rides her Harley motorcycle; her toy poodle balances in a basket between the handlebars.

2. Connect two sentences with a transition in between.
   Pattern: *Complete sentence; transition, complete sentence.*
   Example: My father does not approve of his mother cruising around town on a Harley motorcycle; however, Grandma has never cared what anyone thinks.

3. Complicated (or multi-part) lists of items.
   Pattern: *Item, More Information; Item, More Information; and Item, More Information*
   Example: On a Harley motorcycle, my grandmother and her poodle have traveled to Anchorage, Alaska; San Francisco, California; and Tijuana, Mexico.

4. General Rules
   - The two main clauses that the semicolon joins should be closely related in meaning.
   - Don’t capitalize the word that follows the semicolon unless that word is a proper noun, one that is *always* capitalized.
   - Limit your use of semicolons; you should not scatter them everywhere. Semicolons are like glasses of champagne; save them for special occasions.

**Colon ( : )** They elaborate on the first clause of a sentence. Here are some colon uses:

1. After an independent clause to introduce a series of words, phrases, or clauses.
   Example - When you think about your future career, you must consider a number of questions: What work will I do best? Where will I live?

2. Use a colon to introduce a long quotation

3. To introduce a definition or amplification.
   Example - A woman: without her, man is nothing.
4. In a formal title:
   - Example - The Chronicles of Narnia: Fact or Fiction

**Commas** – Use to generate a natural pause in speech or break up ideas*

1. To separate words and word groups in a simple series of three or more items.
   - Example: My estate goes to my husband, son, daughter-in-law, and nephew.

2. After transition words that introduce a sentence, such as therefore, however, thus, furthermore.
   - Example: Therefore, my mother will not be coming to Mexico with us.

3. Use double commas to set off expressions that interrupt the sentence flow. The words between the commas are called the “set off phrase” and this phrase should not be integral to the meaning of the sentence.
   - Example: I am, by the way, very nervous about this.

4. After introductory a) clauses, b) phrases, or c) words that come before the main clause.
   - Example: From the beginning of the story, the character has always worried about his sister.

5. To separate contrasted coordinate elements or to indicate a distinct pause or shift.
   - Example: He was merely ignorant, not stupid.

6. Set off all geographical names, items in dates (except the month and day), addresses (except the street number and name), and titles in names.
   - Example: July 22, 1959, was a momentous day in his life. Who lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC?

7. To shift between the main discourse and a quotation.
   - Example: John said without emotion, "I'll see you tomorrow."

**Quotation Marks** – Academically, they used when integrating research into a paper. They can also be utilized for dialogue, changing meanings of words, and formatting titles.

   - Research Example: Jones argues, “science has not answered religion’s questions.”
   - Dialogue Example: "When will you be here?" he asked.

**Dashes** – They add emphasis or an abrupt change of thought

   - Example: You are the friend—the only friend—who offered to help me.

**Apostrophes** – Indicates a noun’s possession or plural possession.

   - Example: My cousin’s wife was late to the party.
   - Example: The actresses’ roles were taken out of the play.

* The rules listed here are not exhaustive. We have just included the basic and most important guidelines.

References: [http://www.grammarbook.com](http://www.grammarbook.com), [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/607/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/607/)