

PUNCTUATION FOR MEANING IN READING

Level 1 Reading: use punctuation to understand meaning, tone and extra information in a text.

1. Why punctuation matters in Reading

In the Reading exam, you may need to explain how punctuation helps meaning. Do not only name the punctuation mark. Explain what it helps the reader understand.

Common punctuation marks and meanings	
Commas (,) Separate items in a list or parts of a sentence.	Apostrophes (') Can show possession: <i>the learner's book</i> . They can also show missing letters: <i>don't</i> = do not.
Brackets () Add extra information. The sentence still makes sense without the bracketed words.	Exclamation marks (!) Show strong feeling, warning, excitement or surprise.
Question marks (?) Show that the writer is asking something.	Capital letters Show names, places, organisations, days and months.

2. Useful answer frame

The punctuation mark is...
It helps the reader understand...
For example, in the text it shows...
This is useful because...

3. Example analysis

Text and explanation	
Text Maria moved to a new city last year. At first, it was difficult, but she didn't give up. "I can do this!" she said. Now, she has a part-time job (in a local library).	Exam thinking • didn't: apostrophe shows missing letters from <i>did not</i>. • I can do this!: exclamation mark shows confidence and strong feeling. • (in a local library): brackets add extra detail about the job.

4. More examples

Punctuation	Example	Meaning in reading
Comma	The shop sells bread, milk and fruit.	Separates items in a list.
Brackets	The meeting is on Friday (Room 3).	Adds extra information about the place.
Apostrophe	The tutor's notes were helpful.	Shows the notes belong to the tutor.
Question mark	Would you like to volunteer?	Shows the writer is asking the reader.
Exclamation mark	Book your place today!	Creates urgency or excitement.

5. Common mistakes

- Do not only say "it is a comma" or "there is an exclamation mark".
- Do not ignore the whole sentence around the punctuation.
- Do not write a vague answer such as "it makes it better".
- Do explain the effect on meaning, tone, detail or clarity.

Quick reminder

Name the punctuation mark, then explain what it helps the reader understand.