Punctuation Practice

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. Which mark should finish the direct question Where did you leave the bag?
   A. Question mark
   B. Colon
   C. Comma
   D. Apostrophe
   Correct answer: A. Question mark
   A direct question normally ends with a question mark.

2. Which spelling correctly contracts do not?
   A. don’t’
   B. dont
   C. don’t
   D. do’nt
   Correct answer: C. don’t
   The apostrophe marks the omitted letter o in not.

3. One teacher owns the notebook. Which phrase shows that ownership?
   A. the teachers’ notebook
   B. the teacher’s notebook
   C. the teachers notebook
   D. the teacher notebook’s
   Correct answer: B. the teacher’s notebook
   For the singular noun teacher, add apostrophe and s to show possession.

4. Which sentence uses a comma to show that Jo is being addressed directly?
   A. Jo please close the, door.
   B. Jo please, close the door.
   C. Jo please close, the door.
   D. Jo, please close the door.
   Correct answer: D. Jo, please close the door.
   A comma separates the name of the person being addressed from the rest of the sentence.

5. Which mark goes around a speaker’s exact words in ordinary written dialogue?

A. Square brackets
B. Quotation marks
C. Apostrophes alone
D. Parentheses

Correct answer: B. Quotation marks
Quotation marks identify the words spoken by the character.

6. Which punctuation fits after ends in When practice ends we will meet outside?

A. A comma
B. An apostrophe
C. A colon
D. A period

Correct answer: A. A comma
The opening dependent clause when practice ends should be followed by a comma before the main clause.

7. Which sentence correctly joins two independent clauses with the conjunction but?

A. The hall was crowded, but, we found a seat.
B. The hall was crowded but, we found a seat.
C. The hall, was crowded but we found a seat.
D. The hall was crowded, but we found a seat.

Correct answer: D. The hall was crowded, but we found a seat.
When but joins two independent clauses, a comma goes before the conjunction.

8. The bikes belong to several riders. Which phrase shows that the riders are the owners?

A. the riders bikes
B. the rider’s bikes
C. the riders’ bikes
D. the riders bike’s

Correct answer: C. the riders’ bikes
When a regular plural noun already ends in s, a possessive apostrophe follows that s.

9. Which mark best fits after items in I packed three items a mug, a towel, and a notebook?

A. Colon
B. Apostrophe
C. Question mark
D. Closing quotation mark

Correct answer: A. Colon
A colon can introduce a list after the complete clause I packed three items.

10. Which U.S.-style sentence places the marks correctly when the quoted words form a statement?

A. “I saved a seat” Ren, said.
B. “I saved a seat”, Ren said.
C. “I saved a seat.” Ren said.
D. “I saved a seat,” Ren said.

Correct answer: D. “I saved a seat,” Ren said.
The comma before the reporting phrase goes inside the closing quotation mark in this U.S. convention.

11. Which punctuation can replace the comma in Noor packed her bag, Ellis locked the door while keeping both complete thoughts in one sentence and adding no words?

A. A pair of quotation marks
B. An apostrophe
C. A semicolon
D. A question mark

Correct answer: C. A semicolon
A semicolon can join related independent clauses without a conjunction. A comma alone leaves a comma splice.

12. The phrase who collects old radios adds extra information about Vera. Which version sets it off correctly?

A. Vera who collects, old radios restored this one.
B. Vera, who collects old radios, restored this one.
C. Vera, who collects old radios restored this one.
D. Vera who collects old radios, restored this one.

Correct answer: B. Vera, who collects old radios, restored this one.
A pair of commas encloses the nonessential clause and leaves Vera restored this one as the main sentence.

13. Which phrase uses a hyphen to group the words that describe the workshop’s length?

A. a two day workshop
B. a two day-workshop
C. a two-day-workshop
D. a two-day workshop

Correct answer: D. a two-day workshop
Two and day work together as one modifier before workshop, so the hyphen belongs between them.

14. Which punctuation best separates these three stops when each stop already contains a city and state separated by a comma: Albany, New York, Boise, Idaho, and Salem, Oregon?

A. Semicolons between the stops
B. Apostrophes between the stops
C. Question marks between all the parts
D. No punctuation anywhere in the list

Correct answer: A. Semicolons between the stops
Semicolons mark the larger divisions between stops. The commas still separate each city from its state.

15. Which sentence correctly shows that the exact words Are you ready form a question?

A. “Are you ready,” Ellis asked?
B. “Are you ready”? Ellis asked.
C. “Are you ready?” Ellis asked.
D. “Are you ready?” Ellis asked?

Correct answer: C. “Are you ready?” Ellis asked.
The question mark belongs inside the quotation marks because the spoken words are a question. The reporting sentence ends with a period.