

# 06. Punctuation

## Avoid overuse of punctuation

If you need to break up your text with commas, dashes or brackets, it is often a sign that your sentences are too long and complicated. Rather than splitting up the blocks of meaning with punctuation, split your sentences to a maximum of about 25 words with one idea per sentence.

## Brackets (parentheses)

**Round brackets** can be used to explain the preceding item in the text, but use them only if truly necessary.

**Square brackets** can be used to make insertions in quoted material, e.g.: "*The ETS [Emissions Trading System] needs to be reformed*", says Commissioner XY.

## Dashes and hyphens

Beware of using too many dashes. 1 dash or a set of paired dashes per paragraph is enough.

**Hyphens (-)** are used to join pairs: the Brussels-Paris route, the height-depth ratio, etc.

**Short dashes (En dashes, –)** may be used to punctuate a sentence instead of commas or round brackets. They are always preceded and followed by spaces.

**Long dashes (Em dashes, —)** are no longer used.

## Exclamation marks

Use only for very serious warnings.

## Quotation marks and apostrophes

use "**single quotation marks**" to signal direct speech and quotes and to flag a word as jargon, while explaining what it actually means: *The 'subsidiarity' principle, whereby decisions are taken at a level of authority as close to citizens as possible*

use '**double quotation marks**' for quotations within quotes.

## Spaces

- colons, semi-colons and slashes are always joined up to the preceding word
- stops (. ? ! : ; ) are always followed by a single space, not a double space

## Bullet points

see [Formatting](#)

## Contact and support

If you require further assistance, please contact:

[Comm Europa Management](#)

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