

- b. Use a period to mark the end of an *elliptical* (condensed) *expression* that represents a complete statement or command. Elliptical expressions often occur as answers to questions or as transitional phrases.

Yes. No. Of course. Indeed. Been there. Done that. No problem.  
 Enough on that subject. Now, to proceed to your next point. Uh-oh.  
 Big deal. Yeah, right. And that's all I have to say. Period.

- c. Do not confuse elliptical expressions with sentence fragments. An elliptical expression represents a complete sentence. A sentence fragment is a word, phrase, or clause that is incorrectly treated as a separate sentence when it ought to be incorporated with adjacent words to make up a complete sentence.

Great news! Our 54-inch TV set arrived yesterday. After we had waited for six weeks. (*Great news* is an elliptical expression; it represents a complete sentence, *I have great news*. The clause *After we had waited for six weeks* is a sentence fragment, incorrectly treated as a sentence in its own right; this dependent clause should be linked with the main clause that precedes it.)

**REVISED:** Great news! Our 54-inch TV set arrived yesterday, after we had waited for six weeks.

**NOTE:** Under certain circumstances, treating a sentence fragment as a separate sentence can be an effective way of treating this element as if it were an afterthought and thereby giving it special emphasis. However, this treatment can quickly lose its effectiveness if it is overused.

A number of years ago Margaret Mead wrote: "Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else."

➡ See also the entry for *And* on page 363.

## 102

The following guidelines will help you decide whether to use one or two spaces following a period at the end of a sentence.

**NOTE:** These spacing guidelines also apply to any other element that comes at the end of a sentence—for example, a question mark, an exclamation point, a dash, a closing parenthesis, a closing quotation mark, or a superscript (a raised figure or symbol) keyed to a footnote.

- a. As a general rule, use one space after the period at the end of a sentence, but switch to two spaces whenever you feel a stronger visual break between sentences is needed. In all cases, the deciding factor should be the appearance of the breaks between sentences in a given document.

**NOTE:** If you are preparing manuscript on a computer and the file will be used for typesetting, use only one space and ignore the issue of visual appearance.

Also use only one space if the text will have justified margins. As the illustration in ¶102f demonstrates, the use of one space will inevitably create some variation in spacing between sentences; with the use of two spaces, the variation may become excessive. (For additional comments on the use of justified margins, see ¶1344g, note.)

If the manuscript has already been typed with two spaces at the end of every sentence, use the *replace* function to change two spaces to one space throughout.

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## ¶ 102

- b. When monospace fonts (in which all the characters have exactly the same width) were in wide use, it was traditional to leave two spaces between the period and the start of the next sentence.

This example is set in 10-point Courier, a monospace font. Note the use of *two* spaces after the period at the end of the previous sentence.

Now that the standards of desktop publishing predominate, the use of only one space after the period is quite acceptable with monospace fonts.

This example is also set in 10-point Courier, a monospace font. Note the use of only *one* space after the period at the end of the previous sentence.

- c. Proportional fonts (in which the width of the characters varies) are now much more commonly used. The standard for proportional fonts has always been the same: use only one space between the period and the start of the next sentence.
- d. With some proportional fonts—such as 11-point Calibri (the default font for Microsoft Word)—the use of only one space after the period may not always provide a clear visual break between sentences. Consider these examples:

This example is set in 11-point Calibri with proportional spacing. Note that the use of only *one* space does not create much of a visual break between sentences.

This example is also set in 11-point Calibri, but it uses *two* spaces after the period. Note the improvement in the visual break.

- e. When an abbreviation ends one sentence and begins the next, the use of one space after the period that ends the sentence may also be inadequate. (The following examples are set in 12-point Times New Roman.)

Let's plan to meet at 10 a.m. Mr. F. J. Calabrese will serve as the moderator. (Only *one* space follows *a.m.* at the end of the first sentence.)

Let's plan to meet at 10 a.m. Mr. F. J. Calabrese will serve as the moderator. (Note the improvement in the visual break when *two* spaces follow the period at the end of the first sentence.)

- f. If you prepare a document with a justified right margin (so that every line ends at the same point), the width of a single space between sentences can vary from line to line. (The following examples are set in 10-point Arial.)

We need to start lining up speakers right away. Please consider Patricia Cunningham for the keynote address. Frederick Haley could be approached if she is not available. (The single space after the first sentence is less than the single space after the second sentence.)

We need to start lining up speakers right away. Please consider Patricia Cunningham for the keynote address. Frederick Haley could be approached if she is not available. (Although *two* spaces have been inserted at the end of each sentence, the break after the second sentence looks excessive.)

➡ For a summary of guidelines for spacing with punctuation marks, see ¶299.

### At the End of a Polite Request or Command

- 103** a. Requests, suggestions, and commands are often phrased as questions out of politeness. Use a period to end this kind of sentence if you expect your reader to respond by *acting* rather than by giving you a yes-or-no answer.

Will you please call us at once if we can be of further help.

Would you please send all bills to my bank for payment while I'm out of the country.

May I suggest that you refer to computer criminals who break into other people's computers as crackers, not hackers. (Hackers are actually dedicated computer programmers.)

If you can't attend the meeting, could you please send someone else in your place.

**NOTE:** Use a period only when you are sure that your reader is not likely to consider your request presumptuous.

- b. If you are asking a favor or making a request that your reader may be unable or unwilling to grant, use a question mark at the end of the sentence. The question mark offers your reader a chance to say no to your request and helps to preserve the politeness of the situation.

May I ask a favor of you? Could you spare fifteen minutes to tell my son about career opportunities in your company?

Will you be able to have someone in your department help me on the Woonsocket project?

Will you please handle the production reports for me while I'm away?

- c. If you are not sure whether to use a question mark or a period, reword the sentence so that it is clearly a question or a statement; then punctuate accordingly. For example, the sentence directly above could be revised as follows:

Would you be willing to handle the production reports for me while I'm away?

I would appreciate your handling the production reports for me while I'm away.

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