

Exercise #1: Practicing Punctuation

Identify which of the five functions of punctuation the underlined punctuation marks are doing. These five things punctuation helps you do are found from the Guide to Sentence Structure and Punctuation: <http://www.lirvin.net/WGuides/punct.htm>

1. To connect sentences
2. To separate introductory elements
3. To separate interrupting elements
4. To separate items in a list
5. To point your reader's attention to what you wish to highlight

To write your answers, make a list from 1 - 5. Then fill in the number of the function each underlined punctuation mark is doing (write out the name of the function as well to further help you learn them). If working this exercise as a print document, you can write the answer in above the underlined punctuation mark. Do both Part A and Part B for this exercise.

Part A:

I hadn't anticipated spending part of a recent weekend suspended from a moving gasbag
800 feet above Times Square. As a rule, I avoid heights, so imagine my surprise when I found
myself high above Times Square shaking in my boots. In popular parlance, of course, moving
gasbags suspended over cities are known as blimps, and New York certainly has its share. On
any given weekend, the skies over the five boroughs are crisscrossed by a veritable exhalation of
airships: including the Goodyear blimp, the Fuji blimp, the Sea World blimp, and the Metlife
blimp. As trips aloft went, my two lighter-than-airborne hours had lacked a lot--no purpose, no
destination, and definitely no inflight snack service.

Part B: (Hint: This passage has a lot of interrupting elements.)

The gods, they say, give breath, and they take it away. But the same could be said--could
it not?--of the humble comma. Add it to the present clause, and, of a sudden, the mind is, quite

literally, 21 given pause to think; 22 take it out if you wish or forget it and the mind is deprived of a resting place. Yet still the comma gets no respect. It seems just a slip of a thing, 23 a pedant's tick, 24 a blip on the edge of our consciousness, a kind of printer's smudge almost. Small, 25 we claim, 26 is beautiful (especially in the age of the microchip). Yet what is so often used, 27 and so rarely 28 recalled, 29 as the comma--unless it be breath itself? 30

31 Punctuation, 32 one is taught, 33 has a purpose: 34 to keep up law and order. 35 Punctuation marks are the road signs placed along the highway of our communication--to control speeds, 36 provide 37 directions and prevent head-on collisions. A period has the unblinking finality of a red light; 38 the comma is the flashing yellow light that asks us only to slow down; 39 and the semicolon is a stop sign that tells us to ease gradually to a halt, before gradually starting up again. By establishing the relations between words, 40 punctuation establishes the relations between the people using words.