**Punctuation Masterclass Activity: Making sure you earn the technical writing marks**

On the writing section of the GCSE paper, there are 16 marks available for technical skills and you would be surprised how many marks a full range of punctuation can earn you. Marks aside, it is important to use punctuation to create pauses to give a voice to your work.

This activity is designed to ensure that no matter how scary punctuation may seem, it is actually easy to use. It’s all about practice but the key is to ensure that you make using these punctuation types a natural part of your writing.

**Copy this down:**

**Semi-colons**

Semi-colons sound scary but the best tip I can give you is to simply think of them as ‘and’ in a compound sentence – not in a list though!

For example,

*The cat sat on the mat and it was hungry.*  becomes

*The cat sat on the mat; it was hungry.*

Notice that each side of the semi-colon is now a simple sentence. You must check this is the case. Unless it is a name, then the first word after the semi-colon isn’t capitalised either.

A better example is (based on mock 1):

*The waste ground is an eyesore; people need space they can use.*

**Now, I want you to practise semi-colon sentences, beginning the sentences with the following subjects:**

1. Recycling
2. Revision
3. Charity
4. Deforestation
5. Bullying
6. Smoking
7. Peer pressure
8. The ozone layer
9. Dreams
10. Ambitions

**Copy this down:**

**Colons**

Colons basically have a little voice that says, ‘Here’s my evidence!’ To use them you must make any declarative statement, fact or opinion and then after the colon give the evidence. For example,

*The cat sat on the mat because it kept him cosy.*  becomes

*The cat sat on the mat: it kept him cosy.*

Notice that the clause the other side of the colon does not make sense on its own but that the pronoun (words that refer to a noun, e.g. David Beckham > he, the cat > it) matches the subject at the start of the sentence. You must check this is the case. Unless it is a name, then the first word after the colon isn’t capitalised either.

A better example is (based on mock 1):

*The waste ground is an eyesore: it is a blot on the landscape.*

**Now, I want you to practise colon sentences, beginning the sentences with the following subjects:**

1. Recycling
2. Revision
3. Charity
4. Deforestation
5. Teachers
6. Smoking
7. Peer pressure
8. Citizens
9. Dreams
10. Politicians

**Copy this down:**

**Dashes**

Dashes add opinions and emphasis to your ideas and are really effective for creating a voice in your writing – they really are!

For example,

*The cat sat on the mat – the warming, comfortable mat.*

Cats – the most selfish animals any homeowner can own – have no consideration for anyone.

Notice that dashes can be used individually or in pairs.

In descriptive writing, use them to add imagery and further description to your nouns:

The trees – the verdant, towering trees – barricaded the tent in protection from the storm.

In viewpoint writing, they add expression:

Seriously, who on Earth invented exams – they must be in need of a brain transplant! I’ll gladly volunteer.

**Now, I want you to practise dash sentences, experimenting with both singular and paired dashes. Use these sentence starters**

1. Recycling
2. GCSEs
3. Charity
4. Parents
5. The mountains
6. The sky
7. Ambitions
8. The playground