HANDY PUNCTUATION REFERENCE

1. **Apostrophe ('):**
   a) omission of letters as in contractions: he’s-he is / don’t-do not / we’re-we are
   b) to show possession: car’s horn / cars’ horns / Harry’s book / men’s hats
   c) to show plurals of letters and numbers t’s / 3’s

2. **Colon (:):**
   a) after the greeting on a business letter Dear Sir:
   b) to introduce a list The following are needed: books, pencils, erasers, and pens.

3. **Comma (,):**
   a) to separate two main clauses joined by for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so (i.e. FANBOYS) We rushed to the station, but the train had already left.
   b) to separate a dependent clause from a main clause when the dependent clause precedes the main clause If it is a good day on Saturday, I will go to the football game.
   NOTE: There is no comma when the clause order is reversed. I will go to the football game if it is a good day on Saturday.
   c) to set off interrupting statements He is, I believe, the best player on the team.
   d) to set off clauses beginning with who, whom, or which (relative clauses) when they are not absolutely necessary to identify or specify a particular person or thing Mr. Jones, who lives on Market Street, crashed into a telephone pole while driving 90 miles per hour.
   NOTE: Clauses that begin with the word "that" usually are essential in identifying particular persons or things; therefore, they are not usually set off by commas The car that he was driving before the accident was demolished.
   e) to set off an unnecessary restatement of someone's name (an appositive) Mr. Smith, my father, is the man wearing a hat.
   f) after introductory words, such as yes, no, first, second, etc. Yes, I'd like to go.
   g) to set off nouns in direct address Mrs. Smith, have you visited the art museum? Have you heard, class, that the assignment is easy?
   h) in direct quotations "I understand," he said, "that you intend to go to France."
   i) in dates, between the day and the year November 7, 1980
   j) between cities and states He lives in Wilmington, Delaware.
   k) to separate words in a series I want milk, bread, butter, and cheese. He hoped that the war would end, that the crime rate would drop, and that his personal problems would be solved.
4. **Dash (—):**
   a) to show a sudden break in thought  *Would you mind terribly passing the cream and—My goodness! Where's my purse?*
   b) to show emphasis before an appositive  *Money, fame, power—none of those things are important without health.*

5. **Exclamation Point (!):**
   a) after emphatic statements  *Help! Be careful!*

6. **Hyphen (-):**
   a) to express the idea of a unit  *I double-parked.* *(verb) / He owns a well-built house.* *(adjective)*
   b) to avoid ambiguity  *re-sign the petition* *(compare with resign from office)*
   c) if a word must be broken at the end of a line, use a hyphen between syllables

7. **Period (.):**
   a) at the end of statements  *John has measles.*
   b) after initials and abbreviations  *Dr. Jones, Ph.D.*
   c) after numbers and in decimals  *1. / 2. / 3. / 0.5 / 1.5*

8. **Question Mark (?):**
   a) at the end of direct questions  *What is he doing?*
   **BUT** not after indirect questions  *He asked what it was.*

9. **Quotation Mark ("):**
   a) the exact words of a speaker  *"Let's go there next week," he said.*
   b) an interrupted quotation  *"Okay," yelled the crook, "hands up!"*
   c) titles of poems, songs, stories, chapters, articles  *"Rip Van Winkle"*

10. **Semicolon (;):**
    a) to separate two closely related main (or independent) clauses which do not have any other joining word  *One is small; the other is large.*
    b) in compound sentences before transition words, such as furthermore, however, nevertheless, therefore, consequently, etc.  *Our plane was three hours late; consequently, we did not arrive on time.*

11. **Underlining (**:**):
    a) titles of magazines, newspapers, books, movies, and plays  *He likes to read the New York Times.*