Punctuation Practice

Read the text below and either take out unnecessary punctuation or add it when required. Focus on semicolons, apostrophes, hyphens, dashes, and the correct placement of punctuation with quotation marks.

One afternoon, while walking in downtown Gainesville, John ran into two good friends: James and Salir. He had not expected to see any of them; but was happy to see his friends faces nevertheless. The three began—to talk about their lives.

Johns first friend, James, told an exciting story, “I found a stray cat a week ago and took her in to take care of her; she really needed help. After a few days, I noticed signs for a missing cat—I called the number but nobody answered”!

After hearing this, Salir usually a very quiet person said to James: “Hey, thats amazing! I lost my cat and put up sign’s all over the neighborhood. You found it! Is it a white colored cat? Is it a well behaved cat?” “Well, she isn’t white, and she is definitely not well-behaved! She chewed up my shoes and books; jumped through the window; and reentered through the chimney”, James said. Salir responded: “Well that’s not my cat my cats‘ behavior is perfect”.

Gainesville State College – Writing Center
Basic Punctuation Rules

Semicolon (;)

1. Use a semicolon to connect independent clauses - parts of a sentence that could stand as their own sentences, and especially before transition words (however, accordingly, nevertheless,...):
   He loved that car; it was his greatest treasure.
   Mushrooms grow very quickly; in fact, after a good rain, it takes only a few hours and you start picking them.
2. Use a semicolon between items in a series where commas are used for each item:
   Science fiction includes Star Trek, with Mr. Spock; Battlestar Galactica, with its Cylons; and Star Wars, with Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader.

Colon (:)

1. Use a colon to introduce information with an independent clause (everything before the colon should be a complete sentence):
   My roommate wants to buy a car, and he has a lot of brands to choose from: Toyota, Ford, VW, and more.

Apostrophe (‘)

1. Use the apostrophe only to show possession; avoid contractions in academic writing (omit the s but keep the apostrophe if the word ends in a plural –s):
   John’s dog will quickly eat Bess’s cat.
   The diplomats’ briefcases were searched.
2. In the case of multiple owners, use -’s with the last noun only to show joint possession:
   Have you seen David and Alena’s new camper?
   BUT: Jack’s and Berta’s expectations of marriage were very different.

Hyphens (-) and dashes (——)

1. Use a hyphen when two words are used together as an adjective before a noun:
   Dr. Jill Stein is not a well-known presidential candidate.
2. Use a hyphen for the prefixes self-, quasi-, all-, elect-, and ex- (meaning “formerly”) and for written-out numbers and fractions:
   Her ex-husband often expressed anti-American ideas.
   One-fourth of his income went to childcare expenses.
3. Use a hyphen to avoid misreading, especially if the prefix would result in a double letter, or to avoid misreading:
   James and Daniel are co-owners of the restaurant.
The film was praised for its re-creation of nineteenth-century London.

4. Use a dash to set off a text you want to emphasize or to introduce a restatement:
   James — a pretty clever fellow — won the contest easily.
   Everything that was broken — from the cracked window to the worn-out carpet — was blamed on the dog.
   Lately, Peter has been making changes in his life — reading more books and exercising more regularly.

**Commas, parenthesis, and dashes to separate information from your sentence**

| Matt told his best friend, Sharon's sister, that he wants to work with you. | Commas are used to set off non-essential text that is closely related to the rest of the sentence. |
| This belief (the incarnation) is central to the Christian faith. | Parentheses are used as a reminder or to add information that is interesting but not critical to the meaning of the sentence. |
| My memories of my grandmother—and they are some of my strongest childhood memories—inspire me to always be patient and kind. | Dashes are used to interrupt the current thought and to emphasize the interrupting text. |

**Ellipses**

1. Use an ellipses to indicate missing or omitted words or sentences inside a quote:
   Smith (2012) acknowledges that treatment for autism is expensive: “Sensory therapy...can cost up to $200 per hour.” (missing words = 3 dots)
   Jackson, a researcher with the CDC, explained: “AIDS is still a massive problem.... It is a pressing health issue.” (missing sentences = 4 dots)

**Placement of punctuation inside/outside of quotation marks**

Two punctuation marks (commas and periods) go inside the quotation marks, two punctuation marks (colons and semicolons) go outside, and two others (question and exclamation marks) can go either place, depending on the meaning of the sentence.