A period is the equivalent of a stop sign. It marks the end of a sentence, the end of an idea, or the end of an action. This handout will help you use periods correctly.

**General Rules**

**Use Periods at the end of Declarative Sentences**
Place periods at the end of declarative sentences: sentences that state a fact or an argument.

- **Example:** The nurses walk quickly down the hallway.
- **Example:** My favorite beach to visit is Myrtle Beach.

**Use Periods at the end of Imperative Sentences**
Place periods at the end of imperative sentences: sentences that issue a command.

- **Example:** Turn the music down.
- **Example:** Leave.

*Note: For more information on sentence function, please see our “Sentences” handout.*

**Use Periods at the end of Indirect Questions**
Place periods at the end of indirect questions: questions that are embedded inside a sentence.

- **Example:** Marcela used to wonder why her cat was so skittish.
- **Example:** His wife asked why he only took out the recycling instead of taking out all of the trash.

*Note: For more information on indirect and direct questions, please see our “Question Marks” handout.*

**Periods in Abbreviations**

Periods are also used in abbreviations: shortened versions of words.

- **Example:** Mr. and Mrs. Jones live on Pratt St.
- **Example:** Sarah applied to the F.B.I.

*Note: For more information about how and when to use periods in abbreviations, please see our handout on this topic.*
Spacing After Periods

**Periods at the End of a Sentence**
Editors disagree about whether sentence-ending periods should be followed by one or two spaces. Currently, the trend is to use a single space. Check your discipline’s style guide for more information.

*One Space:* They went to the store. Afterwards, they got ice cream.
*Two Spaces:* They went to the store. Afterwards, they got ice cream.

**Periods in Abbreviations**
Do not include spaces after periods used in abbreviations.

*Incorrect:* a. m.
*Correct:* a.m.

Periods and Quotations

**Punctuation of Quotations**
Place periods *within* quotation marks.

*Example:* Einstein once said, “Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything *better.*”

*Note:* For more information on how to use quotation marks, please see our handout on this topic.

References