ADVANCED PUNCTUATION

SLASHES (/)
Slashes are punctuation marks used to show choices/options (replacing the need to write the word "or"); in addition, slashes are used to mark new lines of poetry.

Examples: (choices/options by replacing "or")
Which do you prefer, vanilla/chocolate?
Pick one: Male/Female.

Example: (marking new lines of poetry)
"Down the street and into the bush/I had never needed/Yet, I had taken/Was I a thief?"
_____

DASHES
Dashes are punctuation marks (put to different lengths) which have a range of different capabilities in writing. A few capabilities are discussed below

SINGLE DASHES AS COMMAS
Single Dashes (or En Dashes) may act as commas. To use a dash is a matter of individual style.
Examples:
I need to go to the water closet-also known as the toilet.
Buy fruits-vegetables-and-meat.
Abraham Lincoln-the U.S. President-was a supporter of equality.

SINGLE DASHES SHOW SEQUENTIAL INFORMATION
Single Dashes (or En Dashes) are used to show sequential information.
Example:
1910-2010

SINGLE DASHES AS HYPHENS
Single Dashes (when referred to as Hyphens) are used to join words and syllables and are used to form compound adjectives, adverbs, verbs (regular, phrasal, and prepositional) and combine words with prefixes.

Examples:
self-cleaning oven
twenty-four dollars
snow-bounded citizens
co-operative venture
ex-wife
well-known books

Note: Fractions are often hyphenated when spelled out.
Examples:

one-fourth
three-fourths

Suspended Hyphens (sometimes called hanging hyphens or end-point hyphen) are used when the second word of the hyphenate is removed (often for the purpose of naming more than one prefix to a hyphen).
Examples:
Twentieth-Century Composer (Regular Hyphenation)
Twentieth- and Twenty-First- Century Composer (Suspended Hyphenation)

Should I capitalize the second word of a hyphenated set of words? Good question. Some scholars are mixed on this point while others never answer it. Here are our rules:

a. If the hyphenate is combined with two proper nouns, then yes (e.g., as in a name).
Example:
Michael Harper-Collins

b. If the hyphenate uses two proper nouns to form an adjective, then yes.
Example:
Hispanic-American males

c. If the hyphenate begins a sentence, then capitalize only the first word.
Example:
Well-known actors often have reprising roles.

d. If the hyphenate appears in the middle of a sentence, then no (unless the words are proper nouns).
Example:
I think that twenty-eight dollars is enough.

e. If the hyphenate is part of a title or heading, then yes.
Example:
The Well-Tempered Clavier

f. If the hyphenate is the name of a company, business, institution, or other large entity, then yes.
Example:
Tri-City Magnet Schools

DOUBLE DASHES AS COMMAS
Double Dashes (or Em Dashes) are used typically to separate nonessential elements which require additional emphasis or some form of exclamation or interruption. Consider the double dash to give much more emphasis than a comma to a nonessential element.

Double Dashes may be separated: --
Or, Double Dashes may be combined: –
Example:
Jennifer—the hot-blooded mistress—is the best character in the film.

DOUBLE DASHES AS SEMICOLONS
Double Dashes (or Em Dashes) may be used in place of semicolons.
Example:
Jeff is a good friend–he helped me move into my new house.

DOUBLE DASHES AS COLONS
Double Dashes may act as colons. They may be used to direct readers to clauses with explanations or to explain something which precedes them.
Example:
John loves dogs--he is an avid dog show attendee.
John collects different types of dogs–show dogs, pet dogs, etc.

TRIPLE DASHES
Triple Dashes (or Horizontal Bars) are used infrequently to introduce quoted text, working similarly to an ellipsis mark (...).
Example:
She said, "--- stay at home and don't come to the opening at all"

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COLONS
Colons are used for the purpose of explaining the contents of a previously completed thought, proving ideas by providing further material for scrutiny, and/or providing a list of nouns to what is discussed before.

SEPARATING MAIN CLAUSES
When a main clause (or full sentence) follows a colon, the first letter of the next main clause must be an upper-case letter or capitalized.

Example: (Complete Sentence following the colon)
John is thinking about a new career: Firefighting seems interesting.
Otherwise, any material (such as a list) following a colon is lower-case.

Example: (Other material following the colon)
When you want to make vegan pancakes, be sure to have the following ingredients: flour, oil, milk, egg substitute, and sugar.

LONG QUOTATIONS
Colons may be used for longer quotations as well.

Example: (longer quotation and block quotations)

I can't believe what Felix said about Jerry: "He is such a bum, always talking about his dreams and aspirations, but he is never living in the present... if only we could get him some electro-shock therapy."

TITLES AND SUBTITLES
Colons are used to separate titles and subtitles.

Example: (Titles)
Star Wars I: The Phantom Menace
Star Wars II: Attack of the Clones
Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith
Star Wars IV: A New Hope
Star Wars V: The Empire Strikes Back
Star Wars VI: Return of the Jedi

LISTING
Colons are typically used to show lists.
Example:
When you go fishing, you will need the following: a fishing pole, some hooks, a sinker, a reel, and some bait.
_____

SEMICOLONS
Semicolons are punctuation marks which help to connect, separate, and clarify.

SEPARATING MAIN CLAUSES
Semicolons are used to separate closely related main clauses (i.e., complete sentences).
Example:
The toddler grabbed the cup; he did not know what to do with it.
Notice how the first letter of the second sentence is not capitalized. Do not capitalize the word unless the word can be capitalized in the middle of a sentence (as in proper nouns and "I").

COMPLEX VARIABLES WITH ITEMS-IN-A-SERIES
Semicolons are used to help separate items-in-a-series which already contain commas.
Example:
When you have your party, you should invite Carolyn, Shaun's wife; Stacy, Dean's wife; Jennifer, Ted's wife; and, Samantha, Jerry's wife.

TRANSITIONS WITH CONJUNCTS
Semicolons are used to separate independent clauses with conjunctive adverbs, short introductory elements, or conjunctions.
Example:
I love to go to the movies; however, my wife always wants to see these unsettling feminine dramas.

Note that a comma must be used immediately following the conjunctive adverb, short introductory element, or conjunction.

Memorize this little formula (to use when separating clauses):
;   +   conjunctive adverb   +   ,

Example:
My wife took me to see Pride & Prejudice; additionally, she took me to see Sense & Sensibility.

_____

BRACKETS
Different kinds of brackets are used in college writing and in professional writing:

( ) or ROUND BRACKETS (OR PARENTHESES)
Round brackets are used to present additional material which is not necessary for the reader.

Usually, these brackets placed in sentences to help to define terms or to include information which may be of additional interest to the reader. Oftentimes, round brackets which present additional information use bracketed expressions (such as, e.g., i.e., and etc.).

Example:
Robert likes to compete in Judo (i.e., a Japanese martial art which emphasizes throwing opponents to the ground and subduing them).

[ ] or SQUARE BRACKETS
Square Brackets are punctuation marks which are used for setting apart text and for interjecting text into other text, especially quotations. Oftentimes, when a writer wants to customize a quote to fit his or her needs, they will use brackets to alter the information - making inclusions, subtractions, or other simple changes.

Example:
Original Quote: "Your father is angry with you, Timmy. You shouldn't have stayed up so late last night."

Altered Quote: "[Dan] is angry with you, Timmy [and believes that you] shouldn't [have] stayed up so late last night."

Note how the brackets can be used to alter the quote to clarify details, as well as help the rhythm of the text. You must not use brackets to change the original meaning of the message.

When material at the beginning of a quote is omitted or missing, you may use brackets at the beginning to designate that a letter has been capitalized (this may help the readability of the sentence).

Example:
"…life is a journey," says Darwin.
"[L]ife is a journey," says Darwin.

Note: When starting a sentence, no ellipsis marks are needed if the brackets are used to help the lowercase letter to become upper case.

< > or ARROW-POINT BRACKETS (OR CHEVRONS)
Arrow-point brackets are often used to highlight material in a text. Arrow-point brackets can be used to provide short examples to items in your text.

Example:
This zoo has many different types of Corvids <ravens, magpies, crows, and bluejays>.
In some source documentation systems, Arrow-point brackets are used to enclose Uniform Resource Locators or web addresses.

Example:
<http://www.basiccomposition.com>
{ } or CURLY BRACKETS (OR BRACES)
Curly brackets are used to show equal choices to an item.

Example:
Select any entree from the menu {sushi, sashimi, chicken teriyaki, and steak}.
_____

BRACKETED EXPRESSIONS

e.g.
exempli gratia (for example)
Use this expression before inserting one or more examples inside of parentheses.
Example:
I really like different kinds of ice cream (e.g., Rocky Road, Strawberry, and even Vanilla).

[Note: It is customary to place a comma after the abbreviation.]

i.e.
id est (that is -or- in this case)
Use this expression before to provide another way of explaining a term or idea (or even further explanation. DO NOT USE FOR EXAMPLES.
Example:
These techniques were characteristic of the Ninja (i.e., a Japanese Assassin).

[Note: It is customary to place a comma after the abbreviation.]

etc.
et cetera (and the rest)
Use this expression after a series of items to express that there is more in the series (but you will not list the rest of the series)
Example:
We have heard all about your concerns (e.g., the money problems, the car problems, the martial problems, etc.).

sic
sic (thus)
Use this expression after quoted text to indicate that despite any observable errors in the quote, the text was written or said exactly as it appears. USE BRACKETS TO ENCLOSE THE EXPRESSION - DISTINGUISHING IT FROM ANY OTHER PARENTHETICAL MATERIAL.
Example:
Langston Hughes wrote optimistically in his poem "I'se been climbin'...." [sic].

Note: When using any Latinate abbreviations, it is customary to put them into italics.