Periods - They end a sentence.
Sentences that end with two punctuation marks omit the period.
Ex. He used to work at Yahoo!

If parentheses are part of a larger sentence, put the period on the outside. If the entire sentence is inside parentheses, put the period on the inside.
Ex. Hotel rooms are likely to be in short supply throughout August (the peak travel period). Their house was the largest one on the block. (It also happened to be the ugliest.)

Periods always go inside quotation marks.
Ex. The president’s speech both began and ended with the word “freedom.”

When typing on a computer, there is no need to put two spaces after the end of a sentence. One space between sentences is considered enough.

Question Marks - They end a direct question.
Do not end an indirect question with a question mark.
Ex. I wonder if she’ll make it home tonight.

It is not necessary to end a request with a question mark.
Ex. Would you please send this report to Ann.

Place the question mark within the quotation marks if the quotation is a direct question.
Ex. Did you just ask, "Why me?"

Place the question mark outside the quotation marks if the quotation is a statement. The period inside the statement is omitted.
Ex. Who said, "I think, therefore I am"?

If the quotation is an exclamation, keep the exclamation point inside the quotation marks and the question mark outside.
Ex. Who screamed, "The house is on fire!"?

Exclamation Points - They end an exclamation.
A period may be omitted by a question mark or exclamation point, but question marks and exclamation points cannot omit each other.
Ex. I can't stand Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?!
**Commas - They indicate natural pauses and clarify the meaning of a sentence.**

When you directly address someone, set their name off by commas.  
*Ex. Thank you, Lisa, for your support.*

Use commas to separate items or ideas in a list.  
*Ex. Jane will bring the food, Jose will bring the drinks, John will bring the music, and Jackie will bring the cups.*

Explanations occurring in the middle of a sentence should be set off by commas.  
*Ex. Mary Smith, a staff writer at the Big City Times, recently wrote a book on that subject.*

A nonessential word and phrase in the middle of a sentence should be set off by commas.  
*Ex. Your work has been, frankly, awful.*

In compound sentences, use a comma before a **coordinating conjunction** (“and”, “but”, or “so”) that joins two independent clauses.  
*Ex. She purchased the car, but she declined the extended warranty.*  
The prime minister’s plan seemed quickly and sloppily put together, and the opposing party immediately attacked it.

Do not use a comma in cases where the portion after the coordinating conjunction would not make a complete sentence on its own (an independent clause).  
*Ex. She purchased the car but not the extended warranty.*

**Semicolons - They’re stronger than commas, but weaker than periods.**

In a compound sentence without a coordinating conjunction, separate independent clauses with a semicolon. (Do not use a comma. That’s called a “comma splice.”)  
*Ex. The upperclassmen are permitted off-campus lunch; the underclassmen must remain on campus.*

**Apostrophe - Used for contractions and possessives.**

An apostrophe can indicate a possessive for a noun. *Ex. That’s Nancy’s dress.*  
In a contraction, an apostrophe replaces omitted letter(s).  
*Ex. It’s = it is. Don’t = do not.*

**Quotation Marks - Used to indicate language that is not your own.**

Don’t use quotation marks to indicate emphasis. Usually *italics* are used for emphasis.

For more information, go to:  
http://www.thepunctuationguide.com/