Sentence endings

In all cases, make sure you have punctuation, aside from one exception with ellipses.

In dialogue, you often face sentences that are half-complete, abruptly cut or trailing off. You have four options: a tilde (~), an em dash (□), a comma (,) or an ellipses (...). Choose the one that fits the best with the situation.

- Ending with a tilde (~) as punctuation is acceptable. Sometimes, this fits the tone better than an exclamation mark or an ellipses.
- If a strong emphasis is needed, using ~! or ~? is acceptable.
- If a line ends with an em-dash (□), start a new sentence on the next line, treat it as if you used a full stop.
- Line ending with a comma (,): the next follow-up line (from the same speaker) should start lowercase with no prefixed punctuation.
- Ellipses (...) have multiple use cases but still should be used as sparingly as possible. See ellipses section below for further instructions.

Interrobangs

!? is the Japanese one. **?!** is the English one.

Tilde (~)

- Do not overuse them.
- Can convey playfulness or imply that the character is speaking in a teasing tone.
- Does not require the use of a full stop after it, but it can sometimes be followed by an exclamation or question mark.

Ellipsis (...)

> Plural: “ellipses.” Not to be confused with the mathematical term, “ellipse,” which shares the same plural writing.
> Make sure that each ellipsis only has 3 full stops/dots. NO FOUR-DOTTED ELLIPSES. NO TWO-DOTTED ELLIPSES EITHER.

Ellipses can indicate a meaningful pause in speech.
“Meaningful” is the key word here because speech has pauses of all sorts, differing in length and sentence positioning and having an ellipsis for every single pause would result in a script with more ellipses than words. We want to avoid that. In this usage, have a space after the ellipses (think of it as a “super-comma”).

- Assuming the previous sentence trails off for a considerable pause, If the next line from the same speaker is the same sentence, start the sentence with an ellipsis.

> “That’s… not a good idea.”

Ellipses can indicate trailing in or trailing out of speech. Insert an end ellipses for the first line.

> It’s almost as if you’re… // dead.
> It’s… // almost as if you’re… // dead.

If an ellipsis is used within a single sentence (i.e. not connecting two separate sentences on different lines), do not put a space after it.

> e.g. “It’s almost as if you’re...dead.”

Ellipses can continue the thoughts of already finished lines. Insert a start ellipses for the second line.

> I don’t hate you. // …or do I?

Ellipses can be used to trail off in a standalone line, but with ending punctuation. Do not include any spaces before, and treat it following as the ending punctuation it is paired with.

> What the…?
> You son of a…!
> You’re my… Never mind.

> Note: Since the next line from the same speaker is a new sentence, start that sentence capitalized.

The first letter in a sentence starting with an ellipsis should not be capitalized if the line is picking up where the previous one left off. The only exception to this rule is the following:

- A trail-in ellipsis can also express doubt or hesitancy

> e.g. “...Are you sure?”

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