Correspondence Writing Tips

A COMPANION TO THE
MCPS CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL

6th in a series of useful tips
Punctuation and Capitalization in Lists

Below are examples that illustrate the punctuation guidelines for lists. They can be distinguished from one another by the following:
1. A complete introductory sentence
2. An incomplete introductory sentence

Example with a complete introductory sentence
When the list items are complete sentences, the following method can be used:
- The introductory sentence ends with a colon or a period, whichever is appropriate.
- Each list item begins with a capital letter.
- Each list item ends with a period.
There is an exception: If the items in the list are relatively short, simple phrases (not sentences), you don’t need any ending punctuation. An example of this is the two-item list beginning this writing tip.

Example with an incomplete introductory sentence
When each item of the list completes the introductory sentence,
- the introductory sentence may end with a comma, semicolon, dash(—), or no punctuation at all, whichever is appropriate;
- the list items can begin with lowercase letters;
- all but the last item end with a comma or semicolon;
- the second-to-last item ends with and; and
- the last item ends with a period.

Taken from The New York Public Library Writers Guide to Style and Usage, (c)1994