

## Guess what? Sunday is ... National Punctuation Day!

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In a world that seems to grow more complex every day, it's the little things that drive Pinole businessman Jeff Rubin to distraction.

Little things such as misplaced commas, incorrectly used quote marks, exclamation point abuse and the always-irritating misuse of ellipses.

In what Rubin calls his "more serious Type A personality days," such errors sent him around the bend. He used to read the newspaper with red pen in hand, circling any offending punctuation he came across, and then mailing it to the editor with an appropriately nasty note.

But now that he's learned to channel that negative energy, Rubin has taken another route, creating National Punctuation Day, which this year will be celebrated Sunday — a date, not by coincidence, is Rubin's birthday.

The national holiday, recognized by no less than a source as Chase's Calendar of Events, began as a way to draw attention to Rubin's newsletter production business, The Newsletter Guy ([www.thenewsletterguy.com](http://www.thenewsletterguy.com)). But somewhere between inception and reality, Rubin decided the holiday just might help remedy the paucity of punctuation knowledge.

"Now it has become a mission for me," Rubin says. "I'm really trying to help people pay more attention to punctuation and how it affects their business life. Punctuation counts, and I think it counts a lot."

Rubin says he's one of the fortunate few who grew up respecting the semicolon and admiring a well-placed comma. When pressed, he admits to having a special place in his heart for the quote mark.

"I like the way it curves and it looks nice," he says, although he never gave it much thought until asked.

The rules of punctuation, along with spelling and grammar, were drummed into his head in grammar school. In college, he studied journalism and further learned to appreciate all manner of punctuation marks.

But it wasn't long before Rubin realized that outside of newspapers and academia, he was a lone punctuation patron, a singular apostrophe in a sea of misplaced possessives.

After working for several newspapers on the East Coast and at the *Vallejo Times-Herald*, Rubin launched his own business in 1981, creating newsletters for businesses.

His fight against punctuation gaffes is never-ending. The internet and e-mail, with their assortment of abbreviations and lowercase streams of consciousness, had further weakened punctuation knowledge and left Rubin near apoplectic. He strikes back in unusual ways, mostly by denying his business to any company that dares send him

poorly punctuated prose — a frequent occurrence, he says, from those seeking to help him refinance or buy a new home.

If they are so careless in their punctuation, Rubin says, “How do I know they won’t drop a zero?”

National Punctuation Day won’t solve the world’s problems, but maybe it will make people think, Rubin says. It certainly has gotten him thinking, mostly about how he should have organized the celebration better. He plans to ask *Chase’s* to move the holiday next year to September, the traditional start of the school year, and he wants to develop teaching materials for teachers to use around the holiday.

This year, however, the day will pass quietly. Rubin’s Web site ([www.nationalpunctuationday.com](http://www.nationalpunctuationday.com)), should be up and running soon, and when it is, those who share Rubin’s punctuation pet peeves will soon be able to buy T-shirts featuring punctuation humor. One T-shirt is a sendup of the Last Supper featuring Jesus and the 12 apostrophes; another proclaims, “A comma is not a state of being.”

In the meantime, Rubin will press on, i’s dotted and t’s crossed, and semicolons used to indicate a greater separation of thought and information than a comma can convey but less than the separation that a period implies.

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