

# JournalStar

## A day to celebrate semicolons, commas, writers

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This is National Punctuation Day. What's it for?

Founder Jeff Rubin ([www.nationalpunctuationday.com](http://www.nationalpunctuationday.com)) says it's a day to "draw attention to the importance of proper punctuation ... a day for librarians, educators and parents – people who are interested in promoting good writing skills" to do so. If punctuation isn't at the top of your list of reasons to celebrate, Rubin suggests you're missing out.

"Successful people have good communication skills, and that includes knowing how to write properly," he says. "Punctuation counts. A misplaced comma can alter the meaning of a message."

Here are some ways Rubin suggests you should celebrate: Go for a stroll and watch for store signs with incorrectly punctuated words; stop in and correct the owners. Buy a copy of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. Write a mistake-free letter to a friend. Read a newspaper and circle the punctuation errors. (Ouch!) And if this isn't enough, you can tout the day on a T-shirt. Rubin sells versions that plug "Jesus and the Twelve Apostrophes" and proclaim "A semicolon is not a surgical procedure."

Yes, the California newsletter publisher ([www.thenewsletterguy.com](http://www.thenewsletterguy.com)) is serious, and, no, he's not nuts. He came up with the idea at a seminar where a speaker said creating a day to be listed on Chase's Calendar of Events would be a good marketing tool for public speakers. Rubin says this caused him to start thinking about his pet peeves. Correct use of punctuation is right up there.

For that, Rubin credits Dr. Paul B. Snider. Yes, that Paul B. Snider, the long-time head of the Journalism Department at Bradley University. In the three decades he taught there before retiring in 1985, snider created a nation of disciples who pay homage to his exactitude every time they write. Rubin has saved his notes from an early Snider class which included this advice: "Consider the lowly comma. If you regard it as a mere flyspeck with a tail, that may account for some of the capricious uses (and non-uses) of it that appear from time to time."

Rubin says Snider "is more responsible for my success as a journalist and an entrepreneur than any other educator I had."

The professor, who is 86 and still lives in Peoria, responded to Rubin's note about the day with his own letter devoid of "lowly commas" — and all other marks — and

concluding with this P.S.: “Boy, it sure is hard typing a letter without punctuation.” Boy, it sure is hard writing an editorial using every form of punctuation being celebrated today, and brackets [obviously] were a real problem.

By the way, World Teachers Day will be celebrated Oct. 5. Even those who can’t tell their semicolons from their commas will want to mark it on their calendars to acknowledge the Paul Sniders in their lives.