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Punctuate this

**Armed with apostrophes, the grammar squad aims
to write the world's wrongs**

BY ANGUS LIND

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Who knew?

Who would have thought there are people out there who still have enthusiasm for correct punctuation, still maintain a zeal for putting all those funny little marks in the right places?

Who would have thought they would have come out of the comma closet they way they did? In the numbers they did?

A pretty recent not-so-punctual column publicizing National Punctuation Day provoked pent-up passions from plenty of persnickety punctuation purists who promptly penned their pet peeves about and perspectives on periods, apostrophes, semicolons and anything grammatically or linguistically improper that particularly pushed them over the precipice.

Next week: Alliteration. We will move from the Ps to the Qs, so mind them. But right now, here are the best responses from our lovable readers, the "puncs":

"As the owner of waaaaay too many red pens, grammar and punctuation that have fallen into the hands of wrong-doers is a pet peeve of mine. I used to correct e-mails from higher-ups that were posted by the time clock at my old job," Lane Hopper wrote.

"May I suggest a new campaign?"

Of course.

"Eradicating the misuse of loose and lose. I find myself grinding my teeth every time I see the use of loose in place of lose. It shows up in national ads, novels, articles in magazines and seems to be multiplying at a rate similar to that of un-chaperoned rabbits or coat hangers."

Hang loose or lose it, that's my advice.

"My other suggestion is the proper use of the articles of 'a' and 'an' before a word starting with the letter 'H.' As in 'An Historical Guide . . .' The 'h' is not silent, hence the use of the article 'a' is correct.

"Maybe I am more than a bit OCD on this. Maybe I belong in another era. Maybe people need to be caned every time these types of errors occur."

What bugs another reader is the misuse of the apostrophe.

"Occasionally one sees a sign outside a seafood joint that says 'Boil Crab's,' " wrote "Mister Earl." "But look at the names of restaurants and you'll see no rhyme or reason

for the use or exclusion of apostrophes.

“We have Antoine’s, Mona’s and Arnaud’s, but also Popeyes and Starbucks. On the same page with your column was the wonderful story about the reopening of Brocato’s, not Brocatos.”

And if you want more confusion, you could open the phone book and see “Angelo Brocato Ice Cream & Confectionery,” which easily could have been possessive and apostrophized.

To confuse things further, recall the observation of comic Ricky Graham, who embraces the N’Awlins penchant for “enhancing” voids with double plurals or double possessives.

As in the late great D.H. Holmes department store, commonly referred to as “Holmes’s” and, in an even better example, “Holmeses’s.”

Reader Heather Mihlet, who used to work for a local news organization, said she sees spelling and punctuation mistakes everywhere! The worst offenders, she said, are “teenagers on the Internet.”

“My niece constantly spells things wrong, or tries to be clever by captioning a picture, ‘You’re turn.’ So, using a quote from the well-missed show ‘Friends,’ I tell her Y-O-U apostrophe R-E is ‘you are.’ Y-O-U-R is ‘your!’ She thinks it’s funny and laughs but I think it is just sad. Are the schools even teaching these kids how to punctuate correctly? Or how to use contractions?”

I know one thing: I’m convinced the bad spellers of the world have untied.

“I’m an apostrophe freak,” Betty Wauchope wrote. “Several years ago a retirement community on Jefferson Highway ran a beautiful ad with a beautiful background sketch. The ad read, ‘Retirement Living at It’s Best.’ I cut it out and mailed it to them with a polite comment which I don’t remember but I must have said it wrong, because the next week the same beautiful ad read, ‘Retirement Living at Its’ Best!’

“So I cut it out and sent it back with a better explanation and suggested they try it one more time, which they did.”

And it became “Retirement Living Dat’s Da Best.” Just kidding they got “Its” right the third time.

Wauchope said she once saw an advertisement for ‘His and ‘Her’s’ in a Sears catalog and a long time ago she pointed out to the management of Godchaux’s an inappropriate “it’s” in the store window.

And somewhere on Poydras Street in front of one of the major buildings, she said, there’s an inappropriate “it’s” in a bronze plaque embedded in the sidewalk, but she doesn’t recall where.

Totally believable. Send it in if you spot it.

“My pet peeve,” wrote local law clerk Liz Hailey, “is people who use an apostrophe to make the plural. I read countless legal briefs. I regularly ‘red pen’ the briefs because the punctuation and grammar are so bad in so many of them.”

And Dick Lovegrove in Thibodaux said, “As my wife and I travel and read signs, we agree that there must be a major surplus of apostrophes because people are so inclined to use so many of them.”

Well, it’s sad but oh so true. The apostrophe apocalypse is upon us.

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