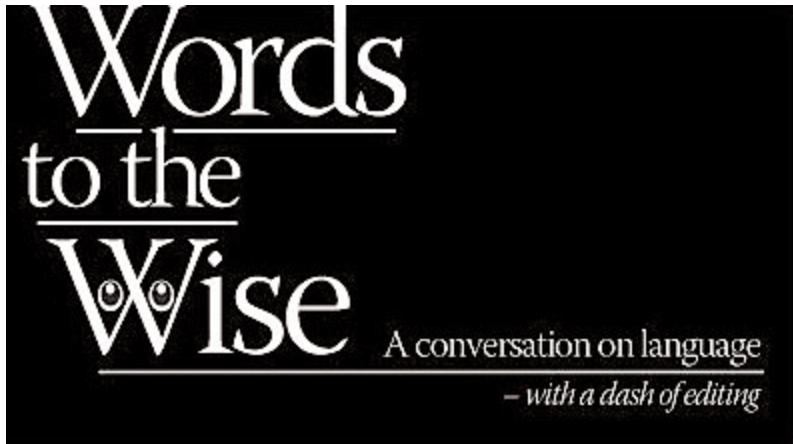


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Happy Punctuation Day, y'all!

By Kathy Schenck
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To honor National Punctuation Day, I wanted to air your punctuation peeves. With an open invitation, my staff and my language-oriented friends on Facebook unloaded, some with vitriol usually reserved for swooning major-league baseball teams. See whether you can mine the following sentences for erroneous punctuation that drives some of us batty.

1. The menu featured a variety of fresh fruits, including apple's, pear's and pineapple's.
2. Obama went to Colorado this week for a speech, and told the crowd of his economic plan.
3. McCain wanted to tour the hurricane-ravaged Texas coast, however, the roads were not safe.
4. "Ya'll must be crazy," said the funny Miller High Life truck driver.
5. The Smith's decided to have their reunion in August.
6. "Outstanding!" he exclaimed. "I just love your color scheme! It's so expressive!"
7. Her father traveled for work and her mother did not.
8. The financial markets were reckless in the 80's, but that's nothing compared with today.
9. His thought — though years in the making — was not revolutionary. He was concerned — rightly so — with his image — which was in need of an upgrade.
10. They met; they dated; they broke up.

THE ANSWERS:

Misplaced apostrophes. The No. 1 peeve by far, especially when they are used to make plurals.

1. The menu featured a variety of fresh fruits, including apples, pears and pineapples. (No apostrophes, please. And for those who like a second comma in a simple series, please see Strunk & White. Heathen journalists do not believe.)

4. “Y’all must be crazy,” said the funny Miller High Life truck driver. (Y’all is a contraction of you all. The apostrophe replaces ou.)

5. The Smiths decided to have their reunion in August. (The Smiths are plural, not possessive.)

8. The financial markets were reckless in the ’80s, but that’s nothing compared with today. (Apostrophe before the number, not after.)

Comma splices. Does anyone know where commas go anymore?

2. Obama went to Colorado this week for a speech and told the crowd of his economic plan. (No comma. Both independent clauses have the same subject.)

7. Her father traveled for work, and her mother did not. (Comma. The independent clauses have different subjects.)

The semicolon. Looks funny but is oh so useful.

3. McCain wanted to tour the hurricane-ravaged Texas coast; however, the roads were not safe. (Semicolon instead of a comma. These are two separate sentences. If you changed however to but, you could use a comma.)

10. They met, they dated, they broke up. (Commas instead of semicolons. The subjects are the same. Only the short pause is necessary.)

Overused — and therefore annoying — punctuation.

6. “Outstanding!” he exclaimed. “I just love your color scheme. It’s so expressive.” (Pick one. Copious use of exclamation points renders them useless. I chose to use one after the interjection.)

9. Though years in the making, his thought was not revolutionary. He was rightly concerned with his image, which was in need of an upgrade. (No dashes. We may speak in dashes, but in writing, they knock a reader cold.)

So, folks, did I miss any of your peeves? Or if you’d like to write an ode to your favorite piece of punctuation, today is the day to do it.