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An accent on punctuation

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Wednesday is National Punctuation Day, which no doubt will inspire some hand-wringing about a crumbling civilization. Given the qrky spelng fueled by texting and instant messaging, it's tempting to declare that punctuation is dead.

Hah!

Or, better, hah!!!!!!!"

Far from burying our punctuation marks, we're guilty of loving them too much. As in: Pumpkin's For Sale ... The team celebrated it's victory. ... We'll go to Paris; if I get a raise.

We make plurals into possessives, and possessives into contractions.

A semicolon has become a comma with drama.

Exclamation points have undergone fertility treatments, often appearing in multiples, as if a mere LOL can't truly convey the heights of hilarity.

Jeff Rubin founded National Punctuation Day five years ago. His newsletter publishing firm in Pinole, Calif., made him conscious of using proper punctuation in the business world. Not only does a well-placed apostrophe keep you from looking stupid, but correct punctuation makes for clear writing, lessening the chances for costly misunderstandings.

Still, Rubin is no wild-eyed crusader. He advocates a low-key approach to observing the day by taking a leisurely stroll, noting store signs with incorrectly punctuated words, then stopping in to correct the owners.

Right ...

Given that many of us still need to rise to the level of his expertise, a better bet may be to check out his website, www.nationalpunctuationday.com, where he explains exactly how each punctuation mark should be used.

Period.