



Canton, Ohio

Gary Brown: Looking for a reason to bake? National Punctuation Day

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National Punctuation Day is Thursday, and I'm a little nervous writing about it. One ill-placed comma and I'll let down an entire language.

What is National Punctuation Day?

It's "a celebration of the lowly comma, correctly used quotes, and other proper uses of periods, semicolons, and the ever-mysterious ellipsis," according to its creator, Jeff Rubin — "The Newsletter Guy." The former newspaperman founded the holiday in 2004.

"Casual shortcuts bred by e-mailing and text messaging have no place in school papers or professional business writing," explains Rubin. "In the business world, words have power and help decision-makers form impressions immediately. Careless punctuation mistakes cost time, money and productivity."

The holiday caught on enough to be listed on *Chase's Calendar of Events* and its sister publication, *The Teacher's Calendar*, both directories published by McGraw-Hill.

According to Rubin's Web site — nationalpunctuationday.com — the holiday now is "celebrated in schools and businesses throughout the world with activities, games, programs and contests."

And this is the part you need to know in order to understand that Rubin is not just a "comma curmudgeon."

Oh, you can send serious "punctuation peeves" to him at jeff@NationalPunctuationDay.com. Here's a little advice. I wouldn't use those shortcuts he was talking about.

But you also can send photos of incorrectly punctuated signage to him at the same e-mail address. That could be fun. You already do that a lot with your friends while you're pretending that you're working.

Then on Thursday, when you go home, celebrate the sixth National Punctuation Day by baking.

It's a tradition started by Rubin to make an official National Punctuation Day meatloaf shaped like a question mark. This year we also can celebrate the holiday by entering the first National Punctuation Day Baking Contest.

The rules are on his Web site. The deadline is Sept. 30. Entrants send a recipe and sample of their cookie, cake, pastry, doughnut or bread baked in the shape of a punctuation mark to National Punctuation Day, 1517 Buckeye Court, Pinole, CA 94564. Also send two print photos — one of you putting the item into the oven before baking and the other taking it out when it's done.

No, I don't know what sweets have to do with improving punctuation. But I think that the more baked goods there are in this world the better, so it's sort of a win-no-matter-what situation. I'm not asking any questions.

Rubin reminds us, however, that this indeed is all for the goal of correct use of periods and other punctuation marks.

“There's an epidemic of poor punctuation in the United States, much like the Swine flu,” says Rubin. “It's too bad there's no vaccine to prevent it.”

Cookies that look like commas are a good start.