

BUSINESS COURIER

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Today We Salute Punctuation!

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Put that shovel away; it's not Arbor Day. And don't bother looking around for gifts, because it's not Christmas, either. Nope, today is a holiday filled with even more glee ... well, at least for word nerds.

It's Sept. 24, 2009, also known as the sixth annual National Punctuation Day. I'm usually not a huge fan of the exclamation point, considering it the most overused punctuation mark. Where stronger writing could better convey the emotion of a sentence, lazy writers often just splatter exclamation points around the page. In this case, though, it seems warranted:

It's National Punctuation Day!

Started by former newspaperman Jeff Rubin in 2004, National Punctuation Day calls attention to the many ways that punctuation marks serve their readers (or fail them, as is often the case). The NPD Web site explains the holiday succinctly: "A celebration of the lowly comma, correctly used quotes, and other proper uses of periods, semicolons, and the ever-mysterious ellipsis."

Beyond having some fun and helping people improve their punctuation skills, Rubin and his wife, Norma, also work to educate children on the joys of punctuation (yes, I said joys). Their Punctuation Playtime program has been presented at schools from California to New York, encompassing storytelling, games and rap songs to deliver the message.

But kids aren't the only ones who can learn a thing or two about punctuation's usefulness. The rest of us would do well to remember the disservice that poor punctuation can do to our written communications, both professional and personal.

While you're checking out the National Punctuation Day Web site, it's not too late to participate in the first NPD baking contest. Whip up your favorite apple dumpling apostrophes or banana nut brackets and send them off by Sept. 30.

Punctuation and baked goods — do these guys know how to party or what?