



Time is spherical, not linear

Long time columnist Tommy Stevenson shares his perspective

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Today is national punctuation day...!?

by tommy.stevenson

TUSCALOOSA | As I am sure you are all aware, today is the sixth annual National Punctuation Day, as recognized by Chase's Calendar of Events (whatever that is) and McGraw-Hill, a national publisher of text books and the like.



Don't believe me? Then check out the NPD website [here](#), where you will find not only information about the "first National Punctuation Day Baking Contest" (what baking has to do with punctuation I have no idea) as well as "Breaking News!" my favorite of which is the stop-the-presses dispatch reporting "Punctuation Man breaks with Associated Press, endorses serial comma," which probably has them shaking in their boots at AP headquarters.

According to a press release that came in over my electronic transom a couple of weeks ago, "NPD is celebrated in schools and businesses throughout the world with activities, games, programs, and contests. It has inspired people to pay attention not only to their p's and q's, but also their commas, semicolons, and ellipses. NPD reminds us of the importance of proper punctuation for communicating clearly at home, school, or at work.

"NPD has received worldwide media attention since former newspaperman Jeff Rubin founded the holiday in 2004, with newspaper coverage from Manila to London and from Seoul to Seattle, in addition to broad radio and TV coverage in the United States – including a short segment on Regis and Kelly in 2008," the press release said.

On the website you will find the 13 punctuation marks (there are only 13 — who knew?), all of which you can click on to find out how they should be used and not be used.

Having or forgotten or failed to learn in the first place most of the rules of punctuation, I tend to be an instinctive punctuator and think I get it right most of the time, although I am sure I have my weaknesses, especially where the use of commas comes in.

But my mother was an English teacher who had a keen eye not just for spelling mistakes, but also for incorrect usage of punctuation marks. It used to drive her crazy on our trips across state to see relatives to spot one of those homemade signs advertising "Fresh Vegetable's" and the like, especially if it was spelled "Vegetables."

I inherited some of that myself, although I now think such mistakes are sort of quaint and are part of the fabric of rural southern life.

In any case, I hope you have a happy Punctuation Day and don't spill any apostrophes, parentheses or ellipses on you as you celebrate.