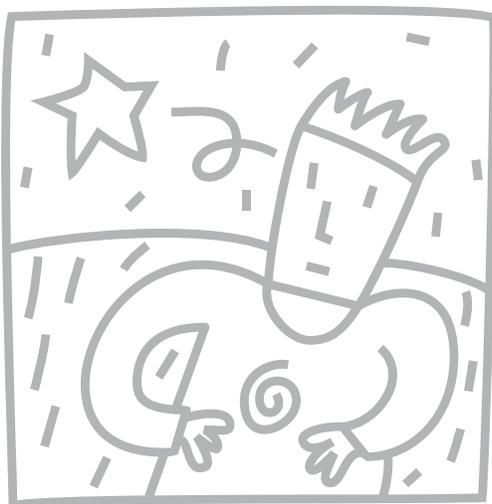


**“FULL”
VERSION**



Practical Punctuation

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by Steve Peha



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Apostrophe

1. Use an apostrophe, often with an “s”, to show belonging.

Two other cars slid to the side of the road. Grandpa's truck did too, just a few yards ahead of us. Dad got out of our truck to go help put chains on Grandpa's tires. But when he got in, the chains fell off and the truck screeched and slid to the bottom of the hill. Dad's truck's tire had popped off, so Dad, Dyllan, Lil, Julia, and I jumped down from it toward grandpa at the bottom of the hill. I sat in the sled with Dyllan to calm her, dad pulled us, and Julia and Lil carried Grandpa's chains.

Grandpa's truck = the truck that belonged to Grandpa

Grandpa's tires = the tires that belonged to Grandpa (or in this case, to Grandpa's truck)

Dad's truck's tire = the tire that belonged to the truck that belonged to Dad

Grandpa's chains = the chains that belonged to Grandpa (or in this case, to Grandpa's truck)

2. Use an apostrophe to show that letters are missing in a contraction.

I can't believe I didn't see that coming. I knew I should've ducked as soon as I saw the kid walking toward me with the lemon meringue pie.

can't = cannot

didn't = did not

should've = should have

3. Use an apostrophe to show that letters are missing in casual speech.

As I got further into the story, it kinda made me wanna try a worm 'cause in the fifth and sixth chapter it says, "The worms were okay."

'cause = because

Apostrophe, cont.

4. Use an apostrophe to show that letters are missing in dialect.

Mushroom scouts peered into binoculars from their perches on top of the refrigerator. They noted the movements of the great fruit horde and calculated where they were going. Half of them fell back and reported to the head tomato: "Sir, the 'orde is movin' southeast at a fast march. I reckon they're goin' fer the stairs."

'orde = horde

movin' = moving

goin' = going

5. Use an apostrophe to show that numbers are missing in dates.

When I was a little kid, my grandpa used to tell me stories about what it was like when he was young, back in '29 or '33 or '41 as he liked to say. I loved the stories but he really freaked me out because I was thinking, "Wow, he's like 2000 years old or something."

'29 = 1929

'33 = 1933

'41 = 1941

6. Use an apostrophe with a letter "s" to form the plural of certain words.

As my old teacher used to tell us: "You need to mind your P's and Q's if you want to get mostly A's and B's."

P's = more than one "p"

Q's = more than one "q"

A's = more than one "a"

B's = more than one "b"

Colon

1. Use a colon to introduce a list of items.

Like clockwork, at 9 A.M., on the *first* Monday of every month, Jonas Hilton-Abercrombie (of the East Hampsted Hilton-Abercrombies) trundled down to the local Sloopy-Mart to purchase several boxes of his favorite breakfast cereals: Corn Flops, Captain Skunk, Honey-Bunches of Goats, and Marshmallow Leprechauns.

2. Use a colon to introduce a list of phrases.

I will always love my grandparents' beach house: the way the waves role over the gooey sand, and the way the sand weaves in between your toes; the way we pick up barnacle-covered rocks and watch the sand crabs scurry away; how we dig for clams and end up knee deep in the never ending sand.

3. Use a colon to introduce a quotation.

Every now and then, for no logical reason that I can understand, I will encounter a person who is freely giving out gum. Beware of the stampede call from these people: "Anyone want some gum?" This question, simply translated, means: "I have found the mother load of single sticks. Come, help me chew them."

4. Use a colon to introduce an example.

I think I will get scared more if you don't make it so fancy, make it original. Example for original: She jumps out screaming "Raahh," is original. Example for fancy: He jumps out screaming, "Ooga, Booga," along with streamers, confetti etc. That is way too fancy.

Colon, cont.

5. Use a colon to separate a title and a subtitle.

All About Spiders: The Ones That Can Kill Ya, the Ones That Can't, and the Ones That are Just Really Gross.

6. Use a colon at the end of the salutation in formal correspondence.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Crowe:

It has come to my attention via our librarian, Mrs. Fink, that your third grader, Arnold, has been having difficulties in the Learning Resource Center. As something of a bookworm myself, I can appreciate your son's enthusiasm for the written word. But I think I speak for our entire staff when I say that we would much rather he read our books than eat them. If this behavior cannot be modified immediately, we will have to restrict him from checking out our more expensive hardcovers and pop-ups. Perhaps the switch to paperbacks will save what's left of his baby teeth.

Yours in deepest sympathy,

Mr. Humboldt P. Snoodlemeyer, Principal
Upland Downs Primary Preparatory Academy and Country Day School

Comma

1. Use a comma to separate items in a series.

I'm not the only one to share these pleasures. My aunt, uncle, cousins, family, and of course, my grandparents also share this. In the summer we play volleyball, baseball, and badminton.

Dusting is the worst: dust, set down, pick up, dust, set down. There are so many things to dust, and it's no fun.

Last year in Seattle, we thought the Mariners were going to go all the way, but in the playoffs their pitching was inconsistent, their fielding was sloppy, and their mighty bats which all season long had pummeled opposing pitchers seemed to wilt and wither under the pressure of championship play.

Screech, screech, screech! The first time we tried to play the recorders it sounded like a lion running his claws down a chalkboard.

He was great, a one-of-a-kind guy: stand-up, Church-going, apple-pie-eating, fun-loving kind of guy, that John Lytle, Lytle with a "y," thank you very much.

Comma, cont.

2. Use a comma to separate meaningful parts of sentences.

I pulled on my backpack, tore out of the room, sprinted down the stairs, sped down the hallway, and bounded out the door.

As you've probably heard on the news, lots of kids are complaining about too much homework lately. This is the main reason that some people want to take away recess, to cover the homework during this time.

More and more keep coming out, more "Dolls of Doom", as I call them. Sure, they're selling by the thousands. But they only keep them interested for a month, and then they ask for another, and the cycle goes on.

I am not nearly an adult now, but I have already grown up. It will never be like that again. It will never be like anything more than once, so the only thing to do is enjoy every moment of life, no matter what, because in the next minute, it will change and you will be on to a new part. Everything is a memory, and while I sit here reminiscing over what was then, I know I'll be reminiscing again in just a few years over what I am doing right now.

Slowly, and then more rapidly, like a steam engine building up speed, the black smoke rolls out of the pipe functioning as a muffler, and away we go.

I walk up the hill with my friends, then turn into our cul-de-sac, go to the front door, put the key in the lock, turn, and step in.

More Comma Rules

3. Use a comma to separate introductory words from the rest of the sentence.

Finally, Ms. Stromberg talked to my mom about it. When my mom heard about this, she got mad and hurt.

As we were walking back, I was bleeding a lot and aching all over. Finally, we got home. I got ice on my lip which was swollen. My cousin Jessica called the dentist and we went there right away.

From now on, I will be more cautious when I ride my bike.

As I reached the first step to the stage, I had about a hundred butterflies in my stomach. By the third step, they multiplied.

When it's time to go, none of us want to leave. As I say my goodbyes, I think of all the fun we had, and what fun we will have next time.

4. Use a comma to separate “middle” words that add extra information.

Every now and then, for no logical reason that I can understand, I will encounter a person who is freely giving out gum.

To Don, a high school dropout working in a convenience store, it seemed pretty simple: he had just won 2.3 million dollars; his life, as he had conceived of it up to this point, would be forever changed.

When Coral, my mom and Dad's closest friend, pulled up in our driveway, everyone told me that we were going to the hospital to see my mom and my new brother.

And Yet More Comma Rules

5. Use a comma to separate a person or thing from a phrase that describes or explains about it (an “appositive”).

By sixth grade, we had become best friends. I think it hit us both by surprise because we were totally opposite in every way. She's blond, tall, and lean, a rebel. I'm short and dark, responsible is an understatement.

My friend, John and I left that morning thinking we would return later that night.

I can still remember the morning of March 2nd, 1969, a day that has affected my life more than I ever could have suspected.

6. Use a comma to separate the name of a person from what is being said to them (“direct address”).

“Michael, please tell me...” This is a child's average day in the classroom. The teacher asks a question, the child answers.

“Joe, this is the second time I've told you to turn your music down!”

7. Use a comma when writing dialog to separate the spoken words from the words describing the speaking and the speaker (the “attribution”).

Melissa asked, “Can we go into the cow pasture?”

“Sure,” I said.

“Ok, let's go on the count of three,” said Melissa.

We both said together, “One, Two, Three” and took off like we were being chased by a ghost!

Even More Comma Rules

8. Use commas between consecutive adjectives that go with the same noun.

In my old, battered black wallet I carry many things: a letter from a friend, my lunch ticket, my social security card, many other tidbits and items as well.

Wait, what am I felling? Thick, cold, gooey, watery mud! I was sinking as fast as the Titanic. I felt like someone was pushing and pulling me under.

Huge, round, sapphire eyes lit up his face as if he need them with that big, gummy smile. I thought to myself, why do babies have to be this cute?

9. Use commas to clarify meaning and reduce the possibility of confusion.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep.

The woods are lovely. The woods are dark. The woods are deep.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.

The woods are lovely because they are dark and deep.

Call me Ishmael.

My name is Ishmael. That's what you should call me.

Call me, Ishmael.

Hey Ish, gimme a ring next time you're in town. Here's my number: 555-4321.

What is this thing called love?

What can you tell me about love?

What, is this thing called love?

Is it possible that this thing to which I am referring is love?

Just Two More Comma Rules, I Promise

10. Use a comma at the end of an informal salutation of a letter.

Dear Mom,

Mr. Snoodlemeyer is making me write this letter. I'm sorry I keep eating books in the library. I don't know why I do it. Anyway, I hope Mr. Snoodlemeyer and Mrs. Fink will let me check out more books. I have to finish my report on beavers.

Your son,

Arnold

11. Use a comma to separate the date from the year in the long form of a date, a city from a state in a location, and for every three positions of place value to the left of a decimal point in a number.

On May 23, 2001, the state legislature convened at the capitol in Olympia, WA to wrestle with a budget deficit totaling \$9,587, 543,000.

Dash

1. Use a dash to show that an idea has been interrupted by a new thought you want to emphasize.

People — mostly grownups — were always telling me that things would happen, or I would like something better when I was “grown up.”

It wasn't always the center of our play — we played other games like hide and seek, baseball, tag, leaf fights, we had mulberry feasts — but it was always there.

2. Use a dash to show that a speaker has been cut off.

Max had overheard that “...some of them are going out to the lake past the Valley Acres development to build a bonfire and stay up all night.”

Eddie heard himself say “Who's going?”

“A bunch of them. Greg and Allison, Jeremy and Lisa, Alex and Jane—”

Jerry chimed in: “Yeah, they're gonna have a real party out there tonight!”

Eddie didn't know what to do. One evening he approached his mother, who was sitting in front of the TV knitting something large and blue with great determination.

“Mom,” he started, “there's this girl in my Science class...”

“What's her name?” His mother kept knitting.

“Her name's Jane, and she's... well, I mean, I kind of —”

“What is it, dear?” Knit, knit, knit.

“Never mind, Mom.”

In the open, where the sun has penetrated the old growth spruce, wild mint and clover create a sweet smelling perfume. Another plant I'll mention is — my gosh, is that thunder I hear? That pond is in for a beating now.

Dash, cont

3. Use a dash before the last part of a sentence for emphasis.

It was my first day at the largest school I had ever attended — I was nervous.

Sometimes after we had gone shopping, I would sneak into my mother's bedroom. Then quietly, so no one would hear, I would slip the new shoes out of their box and onto my feet. What I used to think was a grand and ladylike gait, was really an unsteady wobble. I would saunter over to the full length mirror to admire my shoes — well, her shoes.

Walking forward to get a closer look, I recognized Bear, a neighbor's friendly black lab. I reached down to pet the dog, but stopped short as I heard a low rumble in his throat — a rumble that quickly grew to a fierce growl.

4. Use a dash to show the source of a quotation in casual writing.

My favorite part was during a scene where Ramona's class is at lunch:

"She took a firm hold on her egg, waited until everyone at her table was watching, and whack—she found herself with a hand full of crumbled shell and something cool and slimy running down her face."

— Ramona Quimby, Age 8, Beverly Cleary, p. 60

I thought that was funny because she wanted to be cool like the rest of her class, by breaking a hard boiled egg on her head. But guess what, her mother was in such a hurry she gave Ramona a raw egg! Whoops!

Ellipsis

1. Use an ellipsis to indicate that words have been left out of a quotation.

"Michael, please tell me..." This is a child's average day in the classroom.
The teacher asks a question, the child answers.

2. Use an ellipsis to indicate that action has been left out or that time has passed in a sequence of events.

"Michael, please tell me..." This is a child's average day in the classroom.
The teacher asks a question, the child answers.

...I tried to run, but I couldn't. The monster seemed like it was growing by the minute! And then, the most horrible thing was about to happen... I screamed and sat bolt upright up in bed. I gasped swallowing huge amounts of air. I'd just had the most horrible nightmare ever. I'd never been so scared in my life!

Still gasping, I called "Mom!" My mom came sleepily into my bedroom and sat on the edge of my bed. "What is it sweetie?" she asked, her voice full of concern. Tears swelled up in my eyes as I remembered the ghostly monster from my dream. "... I had a nightmare," I finally managed to say.

Quotation Marks

1. Use quotation marks to show words that are spoken out loud.

It all started when Melissa and me were walking outside, with umbrellas in hands, rain boots, rain jackets, and no fear from the rain. We were set for anything. At least that's what we thought. But the real truth lay before us!

 Melissa asked, "Can we go into the cow pasture?"

 "Sure," I said.

 "Ok, let's go on the count of three," said Melissa.

 We both said together, "One, Two, Three." We both took off like we were being chased by a ghost!

 We ran to the edge of the barn and came to a halt. There before us was a pasture full of mud!

 Melissa said, "What are you stopping for?"

 I said, "MUD!"

2. Use single quotation marks to show a quotation inside of a quotation.

 "So, is your Dad gonna let you go to the concert with us this weekend?" Tina asked.

 "No," Gina said dejectedly. "He got, like, all parental on me and said 'Is your report finished, young lady? You know it's due on Monday.'"

 "No way!"

 "Way," Gina responded. "He was like, all, you know, 'When I was your age, Grandpa Joe went over all of my homework every night and if it wasn't done just so, I got the hickory switch.' And I was like, all 'Right Dad, and you had to walk 12 miles to school in the snow in your bare feet.' And he was all 'You bet your Britney Spears I did, young lady.' And I was all, 'Right Dad. You had it so hard. Yadda yadda yadda.' And he was all, 'Don't sass me, young lady' And I was all, 'I wasn't sassing you, Dad. I said, 'Yadda, yadda, yadda.' That's totally different.' And he was all, 'Not different enough to keep you from getting grounded.'"

 "No way!"

 "Way."

 For a several minutes, the two girls sat in silence. Tina pondered yet again the eternal question of who was cuter, Leonardo DiCaprio or Justin Timberlake. Gina tried to remember the middle names of each of the Backstreet Boys.

 "Gina," Tina asked, "what does 'Yadda, yadda, yadda' mean?"

 "It means I'm grounded."

Quotation Marks, cont.

3. Use quotation marks around literal items being used, defined, or explained.

We opened the present and found three sheets of paper. One piece had little lines with symbols under them. The other two made up the key. I pieced together: on January 8th we are going to. The last I spelled out loud. "D" "I" "S" "N" "E" "Y" "L" "A" "N" "D"! I got up to see my mom. I jumped for joy and was thrilled out of my mind.

4. Use quotation marks to show that a word has a different meaning than it would normally.

They say they want to take away our recess so we'll have more time to work in class. But recess was meant to take the energy out of kids so they'd come back to the classroom ready to learn. If we take away even one recess, children may be too energetic to pay attention to the lesson. The "art" of passing notes will most likely increase, what about those kids with ADHD? We may learn even less *without* recess!

Quotation Marks, cont.

5. Use quotation marks around titles when italics are unavailable.

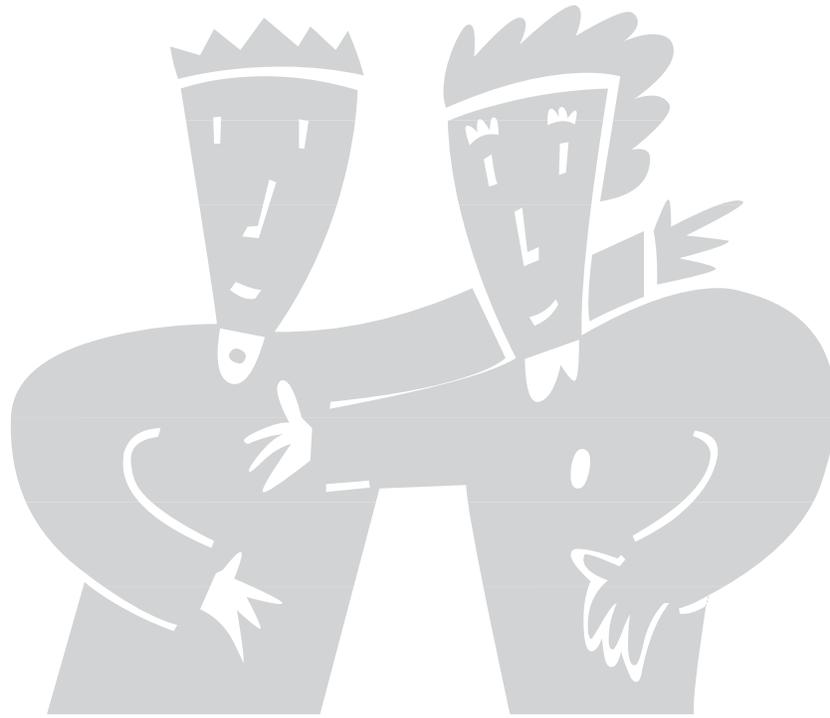
Dolls of Doom

I hate Barbie dolls. The worst things are the commercials. They have annoying little songs that they run in the background while these girls are going "Wow! Her braid changes color!" and giggling their heads off. I had the little jingle for that dumb "Pet Doctor Barbie" running in my head for two weeks straight. Why did the song stop then? They came out with a new one!

My sister has this weird one where the legs change from that weird orangey-pink skin color to some sort of sparkly black when you put the doll in cold water. "When the water's cold, Barbie dives right in; her wet suit magically appears on her skin!" Wet suit, shmet suit. I tried spraying the legs of the doll with some cold water, and it looked like either a whole bunch of moles or some weird case of skin cancer.

More and more keep coming out, more "Dolls of Doom", as I call them. Sure, they're selling by the thousands. But they only keep them interested for a month, and then they ask for another, and the cycle goes on. Pretty soon, some little girl's room will be filled with Barbies. If that happens to my little sister, her room will cave in on mine, which is right under it, unfortunately.

When I'm old enough, I'll join the Army and get myself an M-1 tank or a fleet of Harriers or something, and raid Mattel. Or maybe I'll make them make a doll like "Militia Barbie" or "In the Navy Now Barbie." Pretty soon, all the little girls in America will be saying: "I wanna Barbie, not a GI Joe!" Down with the dolls! Nuke every Fred Meyers or Toys 'R Us that carries them! Let the revolution for a Barbie-free America begin!



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Even the best workshops and teaching materials can't meet the needs of every teacher all the time.

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*I'll do my best to get back to you quickly with answers, additional teaching materials,
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