

Problems, With Punctuation?!

Learning the proper uses for punctuation is challenging for people of all ages. After all, there is an almost infinite number of rules to remember and an almost equal number of exceptions to those rules.

One of the biggest punctuation culprits is the comma. And it's little wonder when one respected grammar guide shows no less than 15 rules for using the comma correctly, and almost as many exceptions.

Commas appear where they are not needed, and are suspiciously absent where they are needed. Apostrophes pop up where they don't belong. Semicolons are used in defiance of logic, hyphens erroneously appear in the place of dashes, and ellipses stretch out into infinity.

The discussion on the proper uses of punctuation is a hot topic not just regulated to the grammar section of the library. Non-fiction books on grammar have even been spotted on the best-seller list.

But if you are less than a grammar enthusiast, less than a word nerd, following a labyrinth of seemingly incomprehensible grammar Dos and Don'ts can actually detract from the writing process.

But isn't punctuation supposed to make writing, and reading easier?

If punctuation causes so many difficulties for today's students, is following a set of confusing rules necessary? If you are not a grammar enthusiast, being forced to follow complicated rules can do a number on a student's motivation to learn.

Punctuation has a deeply rooted history and tends to follow a pattern of popularity. The semi-colon for instance has risen and fallen in popular usage. In France, the semi colon has even been the cause of political mischief.

While punctuation has always been debated, the debate doesn't have a place in classroom. Students writing formal papers for school need to have, at minimum, a cursory understanding with the rules of punctuation.

In informal writings such as in emails, text messages, and instant messages, the rules can be a bit more lax. Of course, informal writing opens the door to informal spelling, but that's an issue for another day.

Remembering all the rules can be next to impossible. Even the best grammarians use a reference for time to time. Here are some grammar guides that we like:

- [The Bedford Handbook](#) by Diana Hacker
- [The Little, Brown Handbook](#) by Fowler and Aaron
- [The Grammar Girl Website](#) at <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com>