

The Write Stuff

from



THE NEWSLETTER GUY®

A DAY TO CELEBRATE PUNCTUATION!



**A semicolon is not
a surgical procedure.**

This is one of several illustrations available on T-shirts, posters, coffee mugs, pen and pencil holders and note cards on the National Punctuation Day® website — www.NationalPunctuationDay.com.

Why a holiday celebrating proper punctuation?
I used to joke and tell people I founded National Punctuation Day to save my marriage. It's a great line that got me a lot of mileage on TV and radio shows and in newspaper articles last year while promoting the second anniversary of the holiday.

But it's not so far from the truth.

Those of you who know my wife, Norma, know how high up I married. She's a gentle, peaceful woman, and listening to me rail against punctuation and spelling errors in Bay Area newspapers, often using less-than-elegant language, was a bit too much for her sensitive sensibilities.

I'd read the paper and I'd be cursing while marking it with a red pen. It looked like I had popped an artery. Norma did not appreciate the language or the negative energy.

People judge us by the way we present ourselves — how we act, how we look, how we speak and how we write. When we are professional in all of these areas, we get our foot in the door for our choice of college, scholarship, job, promotion or business deal. National Punctuation Day reminds us that writing skills can enrich our lives.

> *Inside*



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Think I'm just blowing smoke? Read this e-mail I received from a woman in Oregon who bought several NPD T-shirts:

"This second shirt is for a woman in my office who is a fanatic about punctuation and grammar. I am the Human Resource Manager for my company and this co-worker and I were going through resumes to fill a position in her department. Every resume that had a misplaced apostrophe went to the reject pile."

September 24 will mark the third National Punctuation Day. This year I'll be premiering a performance program for

elementary school students in grades 1-3 called "Punctuation Playtime." Punctuation is important in helping children learn to read and understand what they read; statistics show that students who read well do better in school, get better jobs, earn more money and live more satisfying lives.

Punctuation Playtime will involve children in a participatory theater-like experience that encourages teamwork and

involvement while teaching proper punctuation. It takes a subject that children might roll their eyes at and makes it an engaging and enjoyable learning experience.

There will be all sorts of punctuation-related activities for the kids, including a punctuation relay tag, a *Wynken, Blynken, and Nod* punctuation contest and a punctuation rap performed by facilitators and

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I'D APPRECIATE A REFERRAL

I'm looking for new customers for my newsletter business and I need your help.

Please recommend me to a company that needs help with its existing newsletter, or a business, association or non-profit you've worked with that has talked about a newsletter but hasn't done one.

I'm looking for organizations that are seeking more effective ways to communicate with their employees, customers, members and donors.

I would not only appreciate your referral, but I will reward you handsomely if it turns into my customer. Thanks for your help.

— Jeff Rubin
The Newsletter Guy®



Jesus and the twelve apostrophes

How to celebrate National Punctuation Day

- Sleep late.
- Take a long shower or bath.
- Go out for coffee and a bagel (or two).
- Read a newspaper and circle all of the punctuation errors you find (or think you find but aren't sure) with a red pen.
- Take a leisurely stroll, paying close attention to store signs with incorrectly punctuated words.
- Stop in those stores to correct the owners.
- If the owners are not there, leave notes.
- Visit a bookstore and purchase a copy of Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style*.
- Look up all the words you circled.
- Congratulate yourself on becoming a better written communicator.
- Go home.
- Sit down.
- Write an error-free letter to a friend.
- Take a nap. It has been a long day.



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THE BOOK NOOK

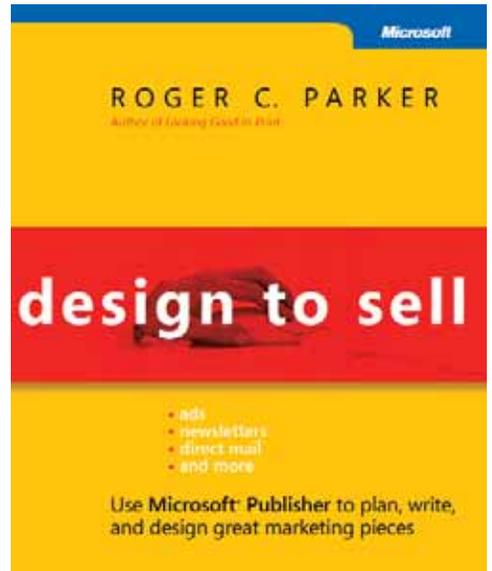
My favorite desktop publishing author has published another book!

Roger C. Parker, author of *Looking Good in Print* and *One-Minute Designer*, has released *Design to Sell: Use Microsoft Publisher to Plan, Write and Design Great Marketing Pieces*.

Design to Sell is the first book that shows, in step-by-step detail, how to use Microsoft Publisher — a popular Windows-based software already installed on hundreds of thousands of computers — as a marketing partner.

If you're doing your own print marketing, Roger's books are invaluable.

All of Roger's products are available through his website: www.GMarketingDesign.com, www.Amazon.com and www.BarnesandNoble.com.



A MYRIAD OF CONTROVERSY

Well. The article in the last issue — *Write Well to Sell: Prospects and Customers Leery of Loose Language* — stirred up a bit of conversation among readers, specifically about the correct usage of *myriad* vs. *a myriad of*.

I wrote *a myriad of* is incorrect. I heard from several people about this. It turns out that, according to modern usage (I am dating myself here!), both are acceptable.

Here are two on-line comments about this issue:

Recent criticism of the use of *myriad* as a noun, both in the plural form *myriads* and in the phrase *a myriad of*, seems to reflect a mistaken belief that the word was originally and is still properly only an adjective.

The noun is, in fact, the

older form, dating to the 16th century.

The noun *myriad* has appeared in the works of such writers as Milton (plural *myriads*) and Thoreau (*a myriad of*), and it continues to occur frequently in reputable English. There is no reason to avoid it.

— Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

Throughout most of its history in English *myriad* was used as a noun, as in *a myriad of men*. In the 19th century it began to be used in poetry as an adjective, as in *myriad men*.

Both usages in English are acceptable, as in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Myriad Myriads of Lives*.

This poetic, adjectival use became so entrenched that many people came to consider it as the only correct use.

In fact, both uses in English are parallel with those of the original ancient Greek. The Greek word *myrias*, from which *myriad* derives, could be used as either a noun or an adjective, but the noun *myrias* was used in general prose and in mathematics while the adjective *myrias* was used only in poetry.

— The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language.



By the way, I know that one eats a horse *figuratively*, not *literally*, as incorrectly stated in the last issue.

Three proofreaders missed it, including me.

Thanks to the myriad of people who pointed it out to me.



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> *From inside*

students. Each student will get fun, educational take-home punctuation activities — punctuation mark examples and definitions, punctuation mazes, puzzles and contests, matching games and colorful punctuation quizzes — that they can do with their families and friends.

For more information, see www.NationalPunctuationDay.com/playtime.html.

As a career-journalist, I'm sad to see such a dramatic decline in writing skills; we communicate so much by phone and e-mail (where abbreviations and lower-case letters run rampant), that writing skills are no longer considered important. What's worse is many people don't see this as a problem.



...An ellipsis is not when the moon moves in front of the sun.

When you're talking on the telephone, people form their opinion of you based on the tone of your voice. In person, it's based on your appearance. In written correspondence, it's

based on your language skills.

Writing well shows your customers and prospects you're educated, competent and serious about success.



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