

Special Edition: National Punctuation Day

It's National Punctuation Day, and this year, we'd like to give a shout-out to quotation marks. Curly or straight, these little guys serve several legitimate purposes, but we frequently see them used inappropriately and incorrectly. So here's a quick primer.

Directly quoted material: Use quotation marks to indicate directly quoted material—words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs spoken or written by someone else.

The officer said, "There's no cause for alarm."

"We hold these truths to be self-evident."

According to Arlo, there were "chickens flying everywhere around the plane."

Phrases quoted from other contexts: Phrases quoted from other contexts are often enclosed in quotation marks. However, phrases that have become common expressions do not require quotation marks.

Diners may be reluctant to "suffer the little children."

The blue bird of happiness has gone the way of the dodo.

"Scare quotes": Quotation marks are sometimes employed to indicate words or phrases that are being used in a nonstandard or ironic way.

"Military intelligence" sometimes flunks the exam.

Common expressions and slang: You can use quotation marks with words or phrases that are not part of your normal vocabulary or that you think the reader might not understand. If you do so, use quotation marks for the first instance of the term, but not for subsequent references.

The standoff turned "sparky," as they say in Special Ops.

Please do *not* use quotation marks for common expressions or to emphasize words or phrases.

The green revolution has finally come to the workplace.

The geeks shall inherit the earth.

Double versus single quotation marks: As a general rule, in the United States, double quotation marks are preferred. Single quotation marks are used to indicate quotations within quotations. In other English-speaking countries, this practice is often reversed.

Punctuation and quotation marks: Periods and commas go inside the closing quotation mark. Colons, semicolons, question marks, and exclamation points follow the closing quotation mark unless a question mark or exclamation point belongs within the quoted material.

Got that? Have a happy National Punctuation Day!

We hope you enjoyed this special edition of *KB CommEntary*. Stay tuned for our regular Fall 2014 issue, coming in a few weeks.

And please remember, *when it has to be right*, KB COMM is here to help.

Sincerely,

Kathy

Kathy Breuninger

KB COMM

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