



# Pesky Punctuation

The Speaking, Reading, and  
Writing Center

College of the Mainland

Spring 2015

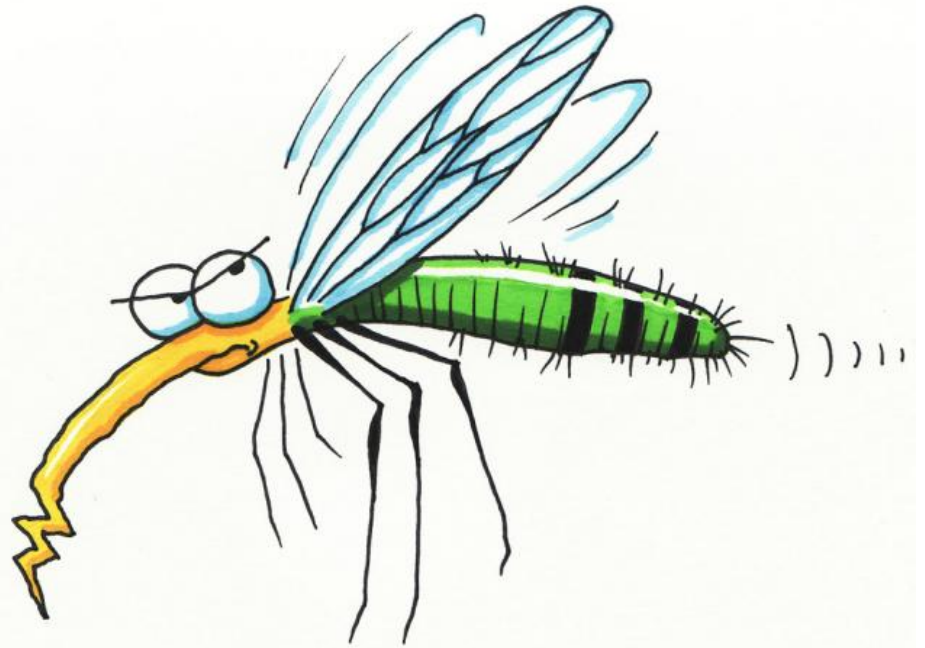


College of  
*the Mainland*

Punctuation can be a  
**pest.**

We know it's important,  
but sometimes we just  
don't understand what  
to do with it.

Let's see if we can clear  
up some of the  
confusion and take out  
some of the sting...



# Common punctuation issues include:

- Semi-colons
- Colons
- Apostrophes
- Quotation marks
- Commas

I would have shared your snarky meme, but I didn't want to be associated with your improper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.



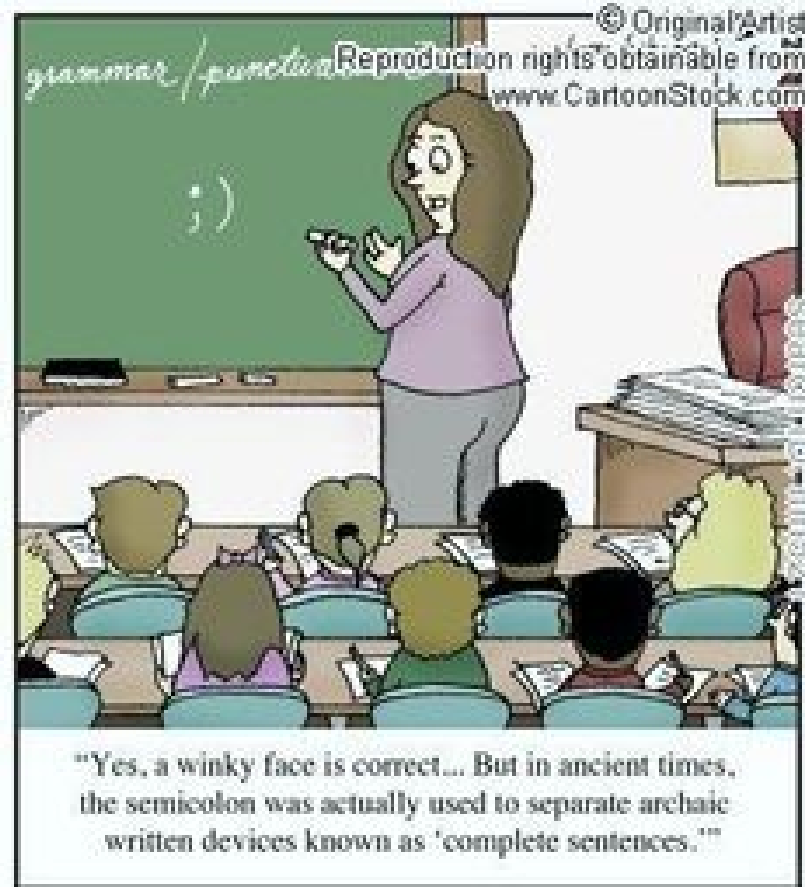
som<sup>ee</sup>cards  
user card

## Let's tackle them now!

# Semi-Colons

The **semi-colon** is most commonly used to separate two independent clauses.

Good rule of thumb: if you use one, then each part of the sentence it divides must contain a subject and predicate and be able to stand alone as a complete sentence.



But don't just join any two sentences. Use this punctuation when joining sentences that are closely related or connected in meaning to each other.

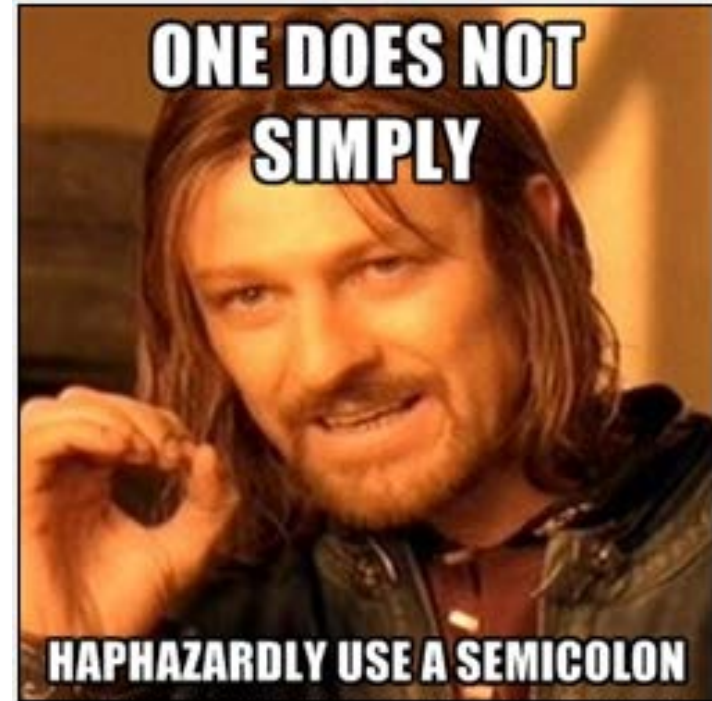
# Semi-Colons

## Correct:

I just failed chemistry; my parents are going to ground me for life.

## Incorrect:

I just failed chemistry; Ted Cruz just announced his candidacy for president.



*The relationship between the two independent clauses in the first example is clear. One thing is going to happen specifically because the other happened first.*

*But in the second example, there appears to be no connection between the two ideas.*

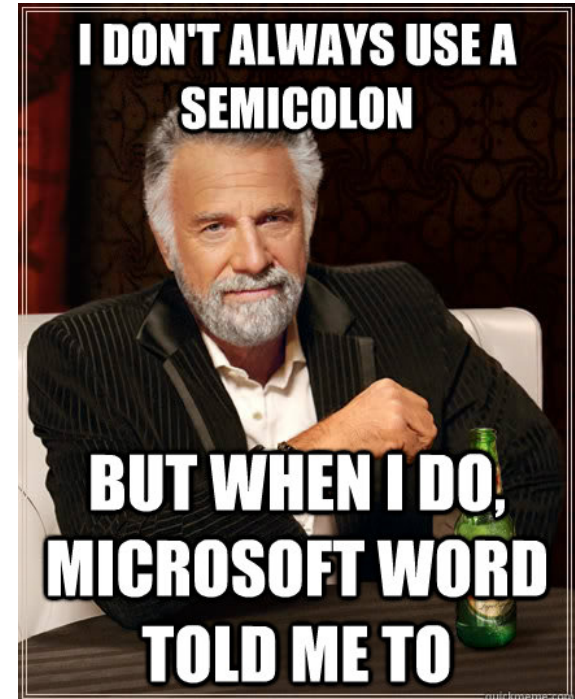
# Semi-Colons

## Correct:

Mark Twain was not a racist; he used racial epithets because they reflected the time period.

## Incorrect:

Mark Twain was not a racist; even though some would disagree.



*The relationship between the two independent clauses in the first example is clear. The second sentence expands on the ideas of the first.*

*But in the second example, what appears after the semi-colon is a **dependent clause**. Replace the semi-colon, or revise the dependent clause.*

# Semi-Colons

## Missing semi-colons & comma splices

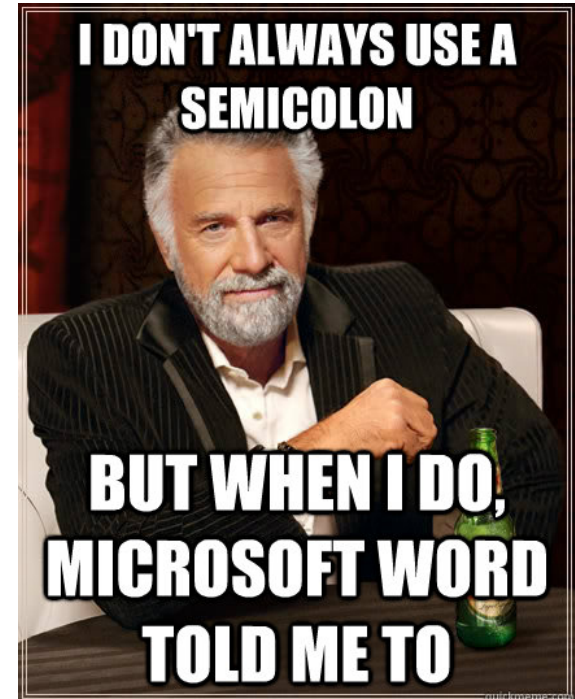
Missing semi-colons create comma splices, or run-on sentences:

Changing the laws on motorcycle helmets is not the answer people need to be more aware of their surroundings when driving.

This sentence includes two different subjects and two different predicates, so there are three possibilities for revision:

1. Place a semi-colon between the two independent clauses:

Changing the laws on motorcycle helmets is not the answer; people need to be more aware of their surroundings when driving.





# Semi-Colons

## Missing semi-colons & comma splices

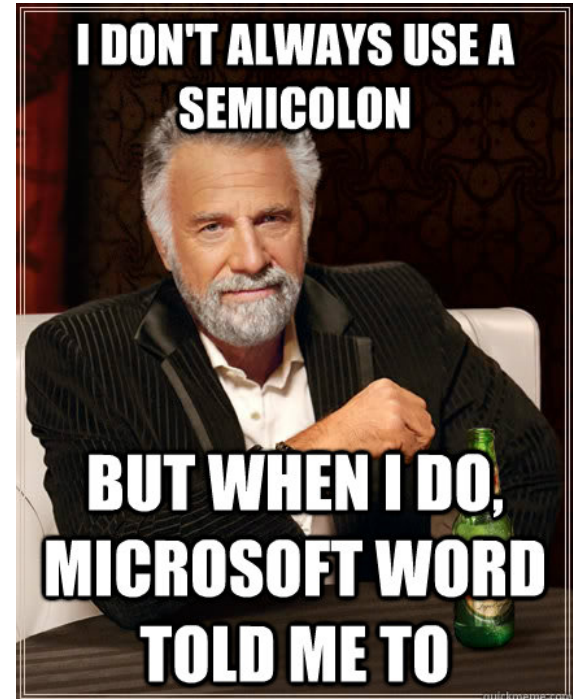
Missing semi-colons create comma splices, or run-on sentences:

Changing the laws on motorcycle helmets is not the answer people need to be more aware of their surroundings when driving.

This sentence includes two different subjects and two different predicates, so there are three possibilities for revision:

2. Add a coordinating conjunction between the two independent clauses:

Changing the laws on motorcycle helmets is not the answer, because people need to be more aware of their surroundings when driving.





# Semi-Colons

## Missing semi-colons & comma splices

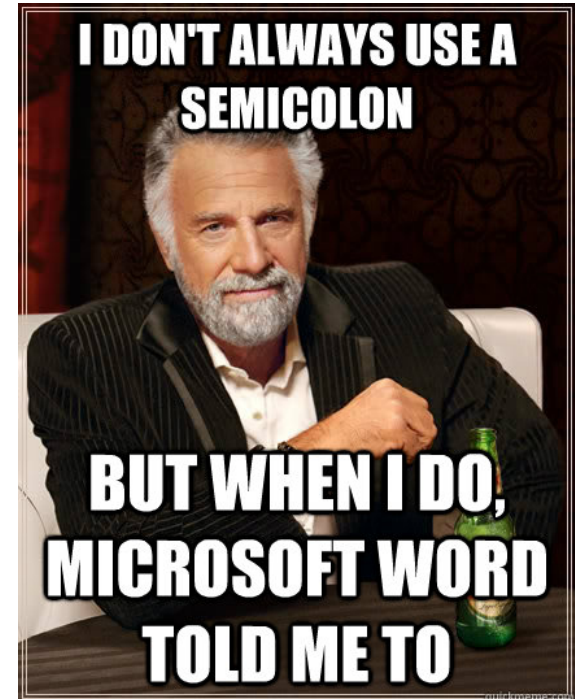
Missing semi-colons create comma splices, or run-on sentences:

Changing the laws on motorcycle helmets is not the answer people need to be more aware of their surroundings when driving.

This sentence includes two different subjects and two different predicates, so there are three possibilities for revision:

3. Separate the clauses into two complete, free-standing sentences:

Changing the laws on motorcycle helmets is not the answer.  
People need to be more aware of their surroundings when driving.



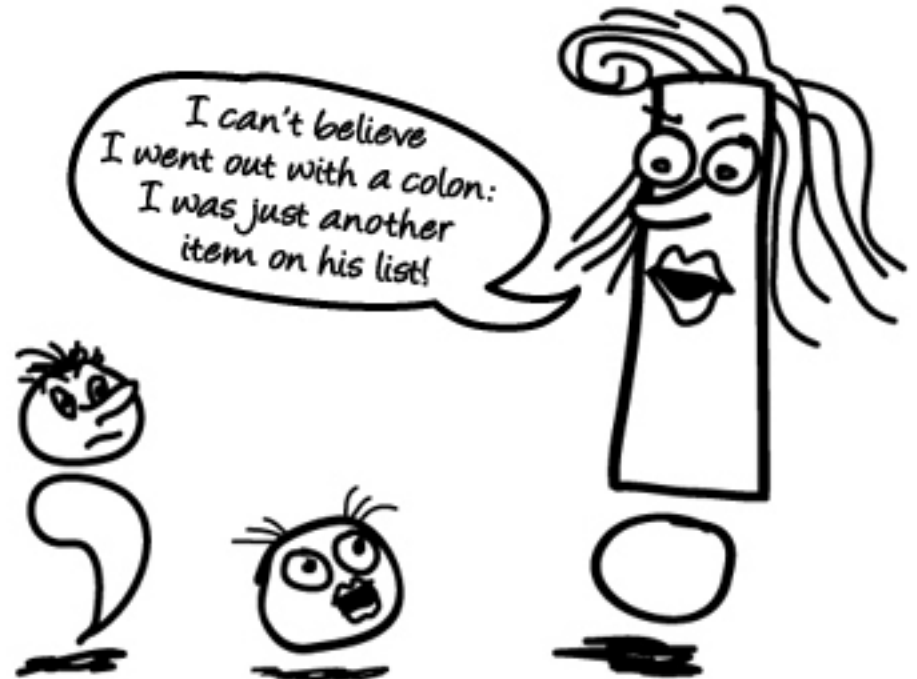
# Colons

The **colon** is commonly used to introduce a list of items.

Good rule of thumb: because the colon functions somewhat as a linking verb before the list, do not use a verb directly before it.

**Correct:**

You will be finished with your degree after completing three more courses: Introduction to Macroeconomics, Business Writing, and Senior Capstone Project.



**Incorrect:**

You will be finished with your degree after completing additional courses, including: Introduction to Macroeconomics, Business Writing, and Senior Capstone Project.

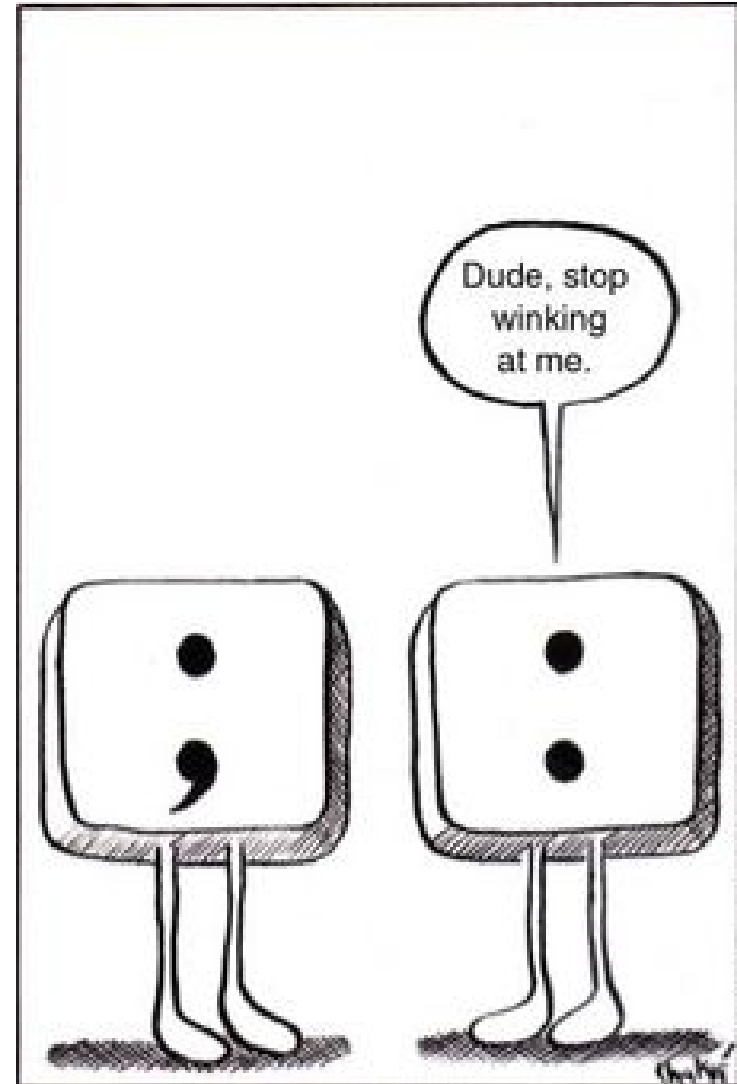
# Colons

The **colon** is also used to link an independent clause to an appositive, which is a word that renames a noun or noun phrase.

The culprit who likely ate the entire bag of cat food: Fluffy.

Do not capitalize the appositive immediately following the colon unless the word is normally capitalized.

The culprit who likely misplaced my keys: me.



# Apostrophes

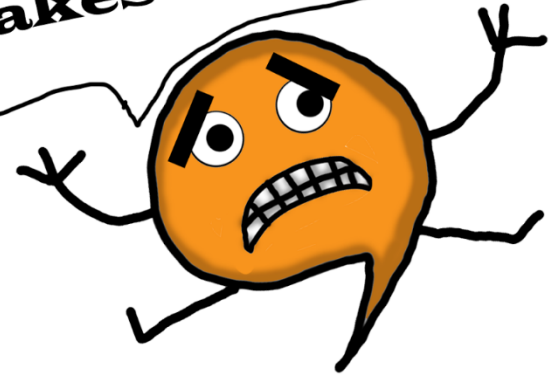
The **apostrophe** is used to join words that form a contraction or indicate possession.

You're funny! That's hilarious!

Jim's hat is too big for his head.

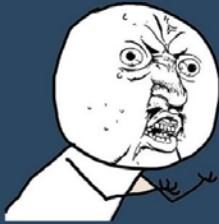
The kittens' mittens are too tiny for their little paws.

**Please don't use me  
incorrectly!  
It makes me sad.**



bridget gongol 2014

**Y U PUT APOSTROPHE**



**ON EVERY PLURAL WORD!?!??**

meme-crunch.com

Common errors:

Apostrophes are NOT needed for possessive personal pronouns, including *its*, *hers*, *his*, *theirs*, *ours*

# Apostrophes



Don't make us call Apostrophe Man...



# Quotation Marks

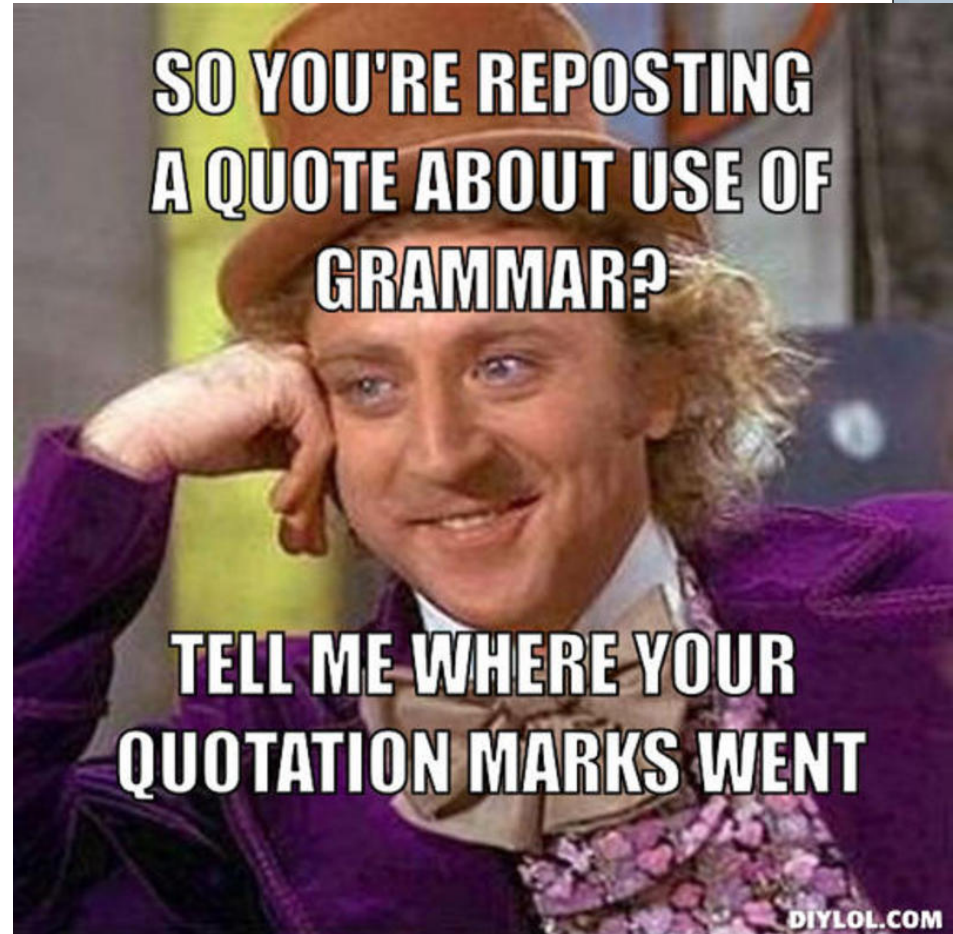
Use **quotation marks** to mark off someone's exact spoken words, or when citing specific passages of text.

Correct:

Ashlen laughed, "Look at Sabrina and Colonel Sanders!"

Correct:

And Caesar cried out, "Et tu, Brute?"

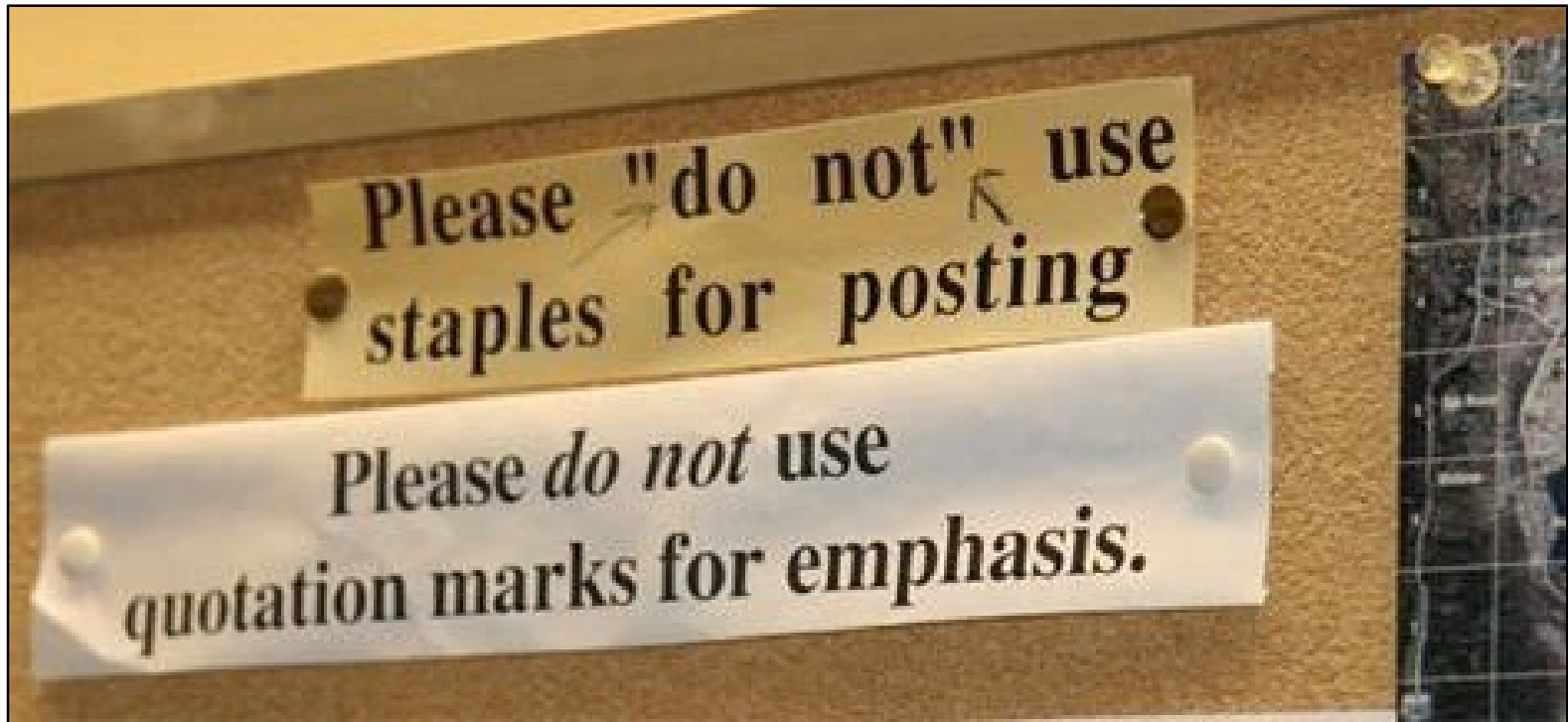


# Quotation Marks

In academic writing, do not use quotation marks to add emphasis to words that you think are extra important or to imply sarcasm, unless they are a direct quote.

Incorrect:

The country began to suffer from the more “progressive” policies of this president.





# Commas

Missing or incorrectly placed commas can make a big difference in how the reader interprets your sentence, so let's review some comma rules...



**Has blade  
named Sting**

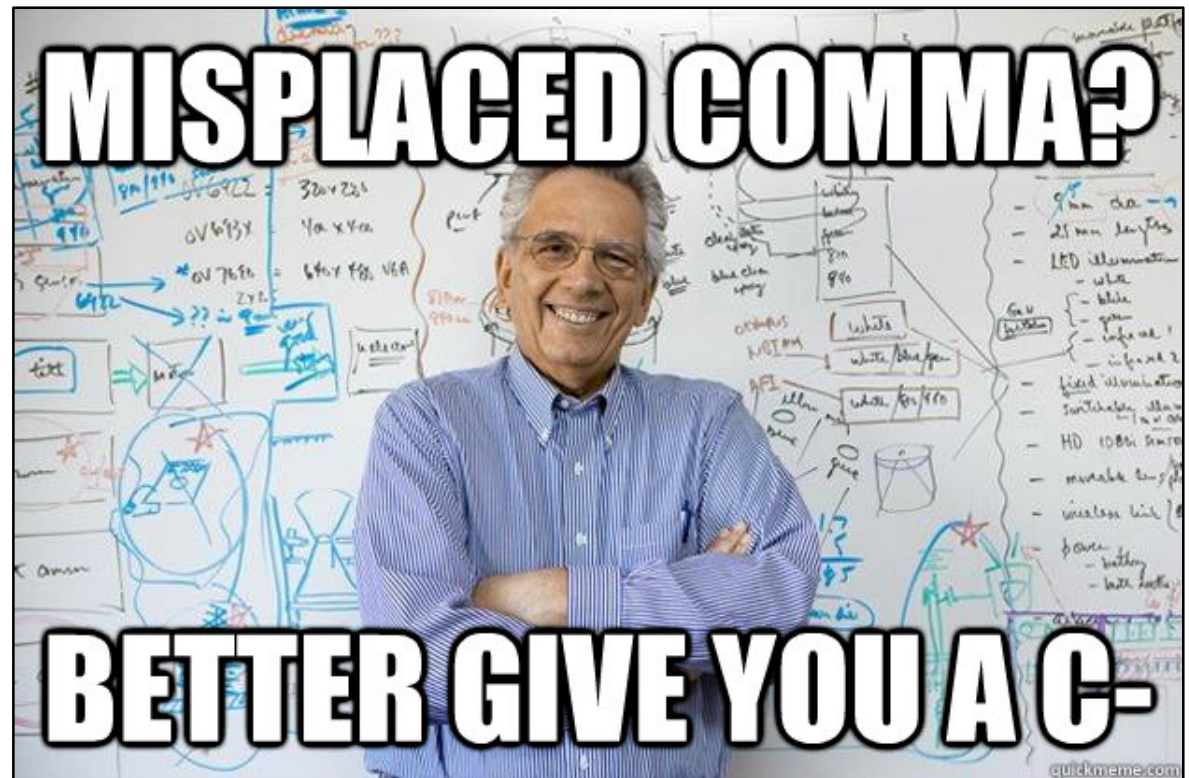


**Has blade,  
named Sting**

# Commas

Use commas with introductory words (at the beginning of the sentence) like conjunctive adverbs:

- Besides
- Further
- Meanwhile
- Next
- Therefore
- Indeed
- Finally
- Otherwise
- Undoubtedly
- Subsequently
- Instead



# Commas

And use commas with transitional phrases at the beginning of sentences:

- In addition to
- In fact
- For example
- That is
- For instance
- In other words
- On the other hand
- Even so





# Commas

Use commas when joining two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction:

Drake graduated on Saturday, and he began his new job the following Tuesday.

Why punctuation matters.  
Some people find inspiration in  
cooking their families and their  
dogs.

Others find inspiration in  
cooking, their families,  
and their dogs.



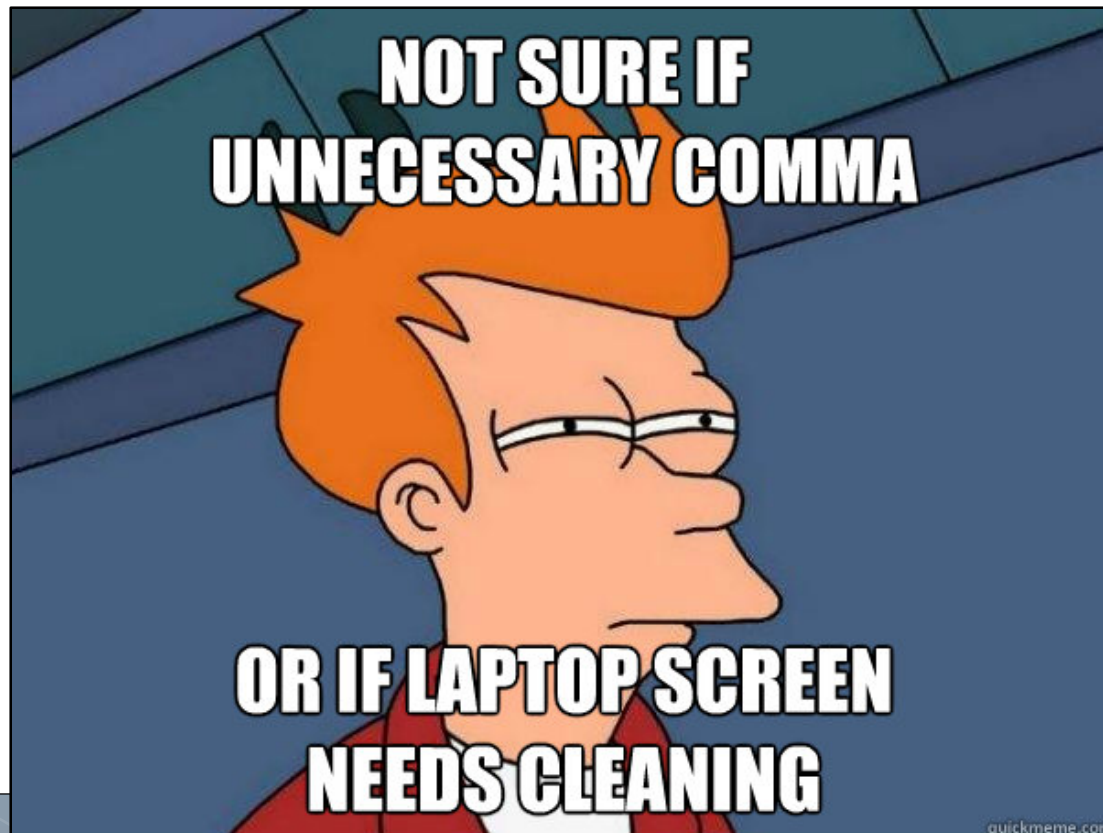
someecards  
user card

[www.writerswrite.co.za](http://www.writerswrite.co.za)

# Commas

Do not use a comma to separate a compound verb that shares one subject:

Josh mulched the garden on Saturday and planted the peppers on Sunday.



# Commas

Do not use a comma to separate a main clause from a restrictive clause (a clause that is essential to the meaning of the sentence):

## Correct:

I plan to run to the grocery store **while the car is full of gas.**

## Incorrect:

I plan to run to the grocery store, **while the car is full of gas.**



# Commas

In compound sentences with two independent clauses, a comma **should** be placed before the coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, or nor, so, yet*).

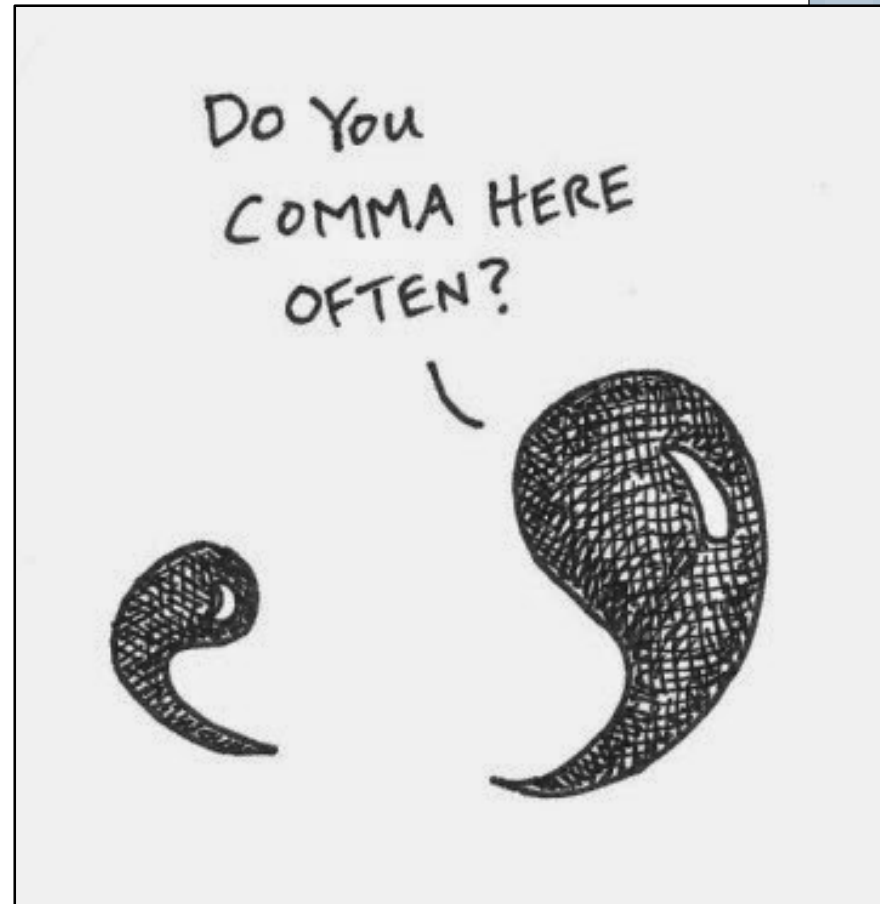
**Correct:**

Ryan offered to pick up Abby's shift, but Abby's travel plans changed.

In compound sentences with one independent and one dependent clause, a comma **should not** be placed before the coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, or nor, so, yet*).

**Correct:**

Ryan offered to pick up Abby's shift but not Josh's.





# Commas

Commas must be used to offset an **appositive**.

The instructor hired Jim, **his favorite grad student**, to assist with a research project.

Do not place a comma after **such as** or **like** before introducing a list.

Many academic disciplines, **such as** humanities, communication, and education, place a high level of emphasis on public speaking skills.

Do not use a comma after a **subordinating conjunction** such as **although**, **despite**, or **while**.

**Although** the rain has been falling all day, the parking lot has yet to flood.





**KEEP  
CALM**

**it's the end**

**of my**

**Presentation**

Consult the following resources when you are stuck:

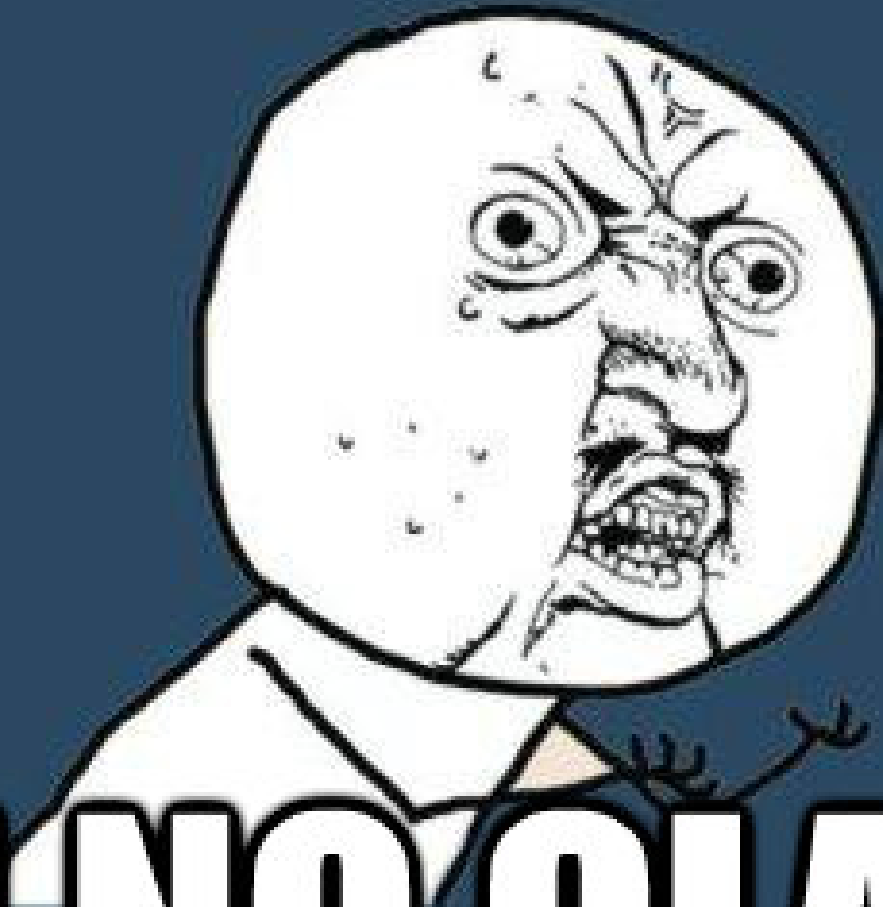
The Little Penguin Handbook

The Purdue OWL

Your instructor

The SRWC tutors

**IT'S THE END OF OUR PRESENTATION**



**Y U NO CLAP?**