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## THE BOOK BENCH

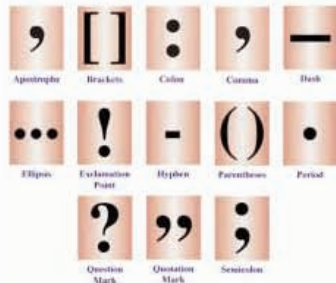
*Loose leaves from the New Yorker Books Department.*

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SEPTEMBER 24, 2010

### IT'S NATIONAL PUNCTUATION DAY!

Posted by Meredith Blake



Most of us who are picky about punctuation—we like to think of ourselves as fastidious, thank you very much—are content to silently grumble when we come across an errant apostrophe on a restaurant menu, or a meaningless set of quotation marks. The more proactive (and

technologically savvy) grammarians might take a picture of the offending punctuation marks with our camera phones, and share it with like-minded sticklers on our blogs; a few will even publish screeds on the subject. Yet by and large the diverse grammarian community has not yet organized politically; like so many disillusioned youths at coffee shops the world over, we're likely to gripe and unlikely to take action.

Jeff Rubin may be the exception to the rule. Sick of hearing him complain about the widespread abuse of commas, semicolons, and apostrophes, Rubin's wife urged him to do something about it. So it was that in 2004 he launched National Punctuation Day.

Rubin is savvy at marketing the annual event, sponsoring haiku contests and cook-offs. His Web site has a playful yet reverent tone. Blown-up version of thirteen different punctuation marks appear front and center on the homepage, in a lineup reminiscent of Mount Rushmore. There's the comma, the bracket, and—my personal favorite—the em dash, with a page devoted to each of these wonderful little symbols. Though we all support proper punctuation in theory, Rubin has not shied away from action, even that which invites controversy. In an Oprah-like move, he got political in 2008 and endorsed the much-debated serial comma—a position that I heartily support.

Inspired by Rubin's tale of grammatical empowerment, I intend to commemorate this day by curling up with my copy of "Elements of Style." Not an especially radical act, but this revolution must start at home.



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