



## Orlando Arts Blog

Matt Palm



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### Haiku contest celebrates punctuation!

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Haiku is a wonderful yet maddening literary form. But here's a novel haiku contest to mark something near and dear to a writer's heart: Good punctuation. It's all in honor of National Punctuation Day — which is right around the corner. Have you bought your editor a gift yet? Or at least a card — and make sure there's no foul-up between *it's* and *its*!

Here's the contest announcement from the folks at National Punctuation Day:

*Punctuation marks:*

*Commas, colons, periods*

*That give words meaning.*

Ah. It's the essence of punctuation in a simple haiku.

This year, to celebrate the seventh annual National Punctuation Day (NPD) on Sept. 24 the NPD group is holding the first National Punctuation Day Haiku Contest, with the winners receiving a plethora of punctuation goodies.

It will be a celebration of proper punctuation in traditional Japanese-style verse. Send your best poetry to [Jeff@NationalPunctuationDay.com](mailto:Jeff@NationalPunctuationDay.com), and let the literary games begin!

Haikus must be received by Sept. 30 to be considered for prizes.

National Punctuation Day is the holiday that reminds America that a semicolon is not a surgical procedure. NPD is celebrated in schools and businesses throughout the world with activities, games, programs and contests. It has inspired people to pay attention not only to their p's and q's, but also their commas, semicolons and ellipses. NPD reminds us of the importance of proper punctuation for communicating clearly at home, school, or at work.

Former newspaper reporter Jeff Rubin founded National Punctuation Day in 2004 to draw attention to the importance of proper punctuation. It's a day for librarians, educators, and parents people who are interested in teaching and promoting good writing skills to their students and their children. It's also a day to remind business people that they are often judged by how they present themselves.

"Successful people have good communication skills, and that includes knowing how to write properly," Jeff says.

"Punctuation counts. A misplaced comma can alter the meaning of a message."

NPD has received worldwide media attention, with newspaper coverage from Manila to London, from Ghana to Toronto, and from Seoul to Seattle, in addition to broad radio and TV coverage in the United States — including a short segment on "Regis and Kelly" in 2008 and a one-hour online chat on The Washington Post website in 2009.

NPD is recognized by Chase's Calendar of Events and listed in its sister publication, The Teacher's Calendar, two directories published by McGraw-Hill.

The NPD website — in addition to highlighting the latest in literacy news and featuring incorrectly punctuated signs from all over the world — serves as a resource that helps educators teach good writing skills and helps students understand the basics of punctuation. Business people worldwide use it as a reference guide.

There's even a punctuation newsletter: **The Exclamation Point!** contains articles on the latest literacy news from around the world, book reviews and commentary.

Besides entering the haiku contest, here are four other ways to participate in National Punctuation Day on Sept. 24: