

The Craft of Scientific Writing

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Kimmelman 361

Unit 5

- Punctuation (part 1)

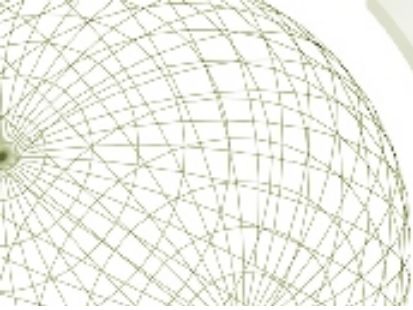
**We will now
eat, human!**

**We will now eat
human!!!**




**LET'S EAT GRANDMA.
LET'S EAT, GRANDMA.**

COMMAS SAVE LIVES



Every Lady in this Land
Hath 20 Nails on *each* Hand;
Five & twenty on Hands and Feet;
And this is true, without deceit.

(Every lady in this land has twenty nails. On each hand, five; and twenty on hands and feet.)



Dear Jack,

I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy – will you let me be yours?

Jill




Dear Jack,

I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men I yearn! For you I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart I can be forever happy. Will you let me be?

Yours,

Jill



So all this is quite amusing, but it is noticeable that no one emails the far more interesting example of the fateful mispunctuated telegram that precipitated the Jameson Raid on the Transvaal in 1896 – I suppose that's a reflection of modern education for you. Do you know of the Jameson Raid, described as a “fiasco”? Marvellous punctuation story. Throw another log on that fire. The Transvaal was a Boer republic at the time, and it was believed that the British and other settlers around Johannesburg (who were denied civil rights) would rise up if Jameson invaded. But unfortunately, when the settlers sent their telegraphic invitation to Jameson, it included a tragic ambiguity:

Jameson Raid

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For The British Heavy Rock Band, see [Jameson Raid \(band\)](#).



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The **Jameson Raid** (29 December 1895 – 2 January 1896) was a botched [raid](#) on [Paul Kruger's Transvaal Republic](#) carried out by a British colonial statesman [Leander Starr Jameson](#) and his [Rhodesian](#) and [Bechuanaland](#) policemen over the New Year weekend of 1895–96. It was intended to trigger an uprising by the primarily British expatriate workers (known as [Uitlanders](#)) in the [Transvaal](#) but failed to do so. The workers were called the Johannesburg conspirators. They were expected to recruit an army and prepare for an insurrection. The raid was ineffective and no uprising took place, but it was an inciting factor in the [Second Boer War](#) and the [Second Matabele War](#).

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1 Background

- 1.1 Foundation of the colonies and republics
- 1.2 Economics
- 1.3 Discovery of gold
- 1.4 Drifts Crisis

2 Jameson force and the Initiation of the raid

3 Aftermath

Jameson Raid



Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Beit, instrumental in the Jameson Raid

Date	29 December 1895 – 2 January 1896
Location	South African Republic
Result	South African Republic victory, see: Jameson Raid


Belligerents



Cecil Rhodes



South African Republic



It is under these circumstances that we feel constrained to call upon you to come to our aid should a disturbance arise here the circumstances are so extreme that we cannot but believe that you and the men under you will not fail to come to the rescue of people who are so situated.

As Eric Partridge points out in his *Usage and Abusage*, if you place a full stop after the word “aid” in this passage, the message is unequivocal. It says, “Come at once!” If you put it after “here”, however, it says something more like, “We might need you at some later date depending on what happens here, but in the meantime – don’t call us, Jameson, old boy; we’ll call you.” Of course, the message turned up at *The Times* with a full stop after “aid” (no one knows who put it there) and poor old Jameson just sprang to the saddle, without anybody wanting or expecting him to.

"You don't need to be a grammar nerd to enjoy this one....Who knew grammar could be so much fun?"—*Newsweek*

The **#1** *New York Times* Bestseller

Eats, Shoots & Leaves



The Zero Tolerance
Approach to Punctuation

LYNNE TRUSS

With a Foreword by Frank McCourt,
author of *Angela's Ashes*



Eats, shoots and leaves

A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots in the air.

"Why?" asks the confused waiter, as the panda makes towards the exit. The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder.

"I'm a panda," he says at the door. "Look it up."

The waiter turns to the relevant entry and, sure enough, finds an explanation.

"Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves."

- ♦ So punctuation really does matter, even if it is only *occasionally* a matter of life and death.



Six uses of the apostrophe

1. Indicates a possessive in a singular noun.
The cat's whiskers; the Queen's English
2. Indicates quantity or period of time
Two weeks' time; four yards' worth of linen
3. Omission of leading digits in dates
Summer of '68
4. Omission of letters (informal usage)
We can't go to Jo'burg [we cannot go to Johannesburg]
5. Transcription of nonstandard English
Regional dialects, underworld slang,...
6. Irish last names like O'Kelly, O'Hearn, O'Neal,...

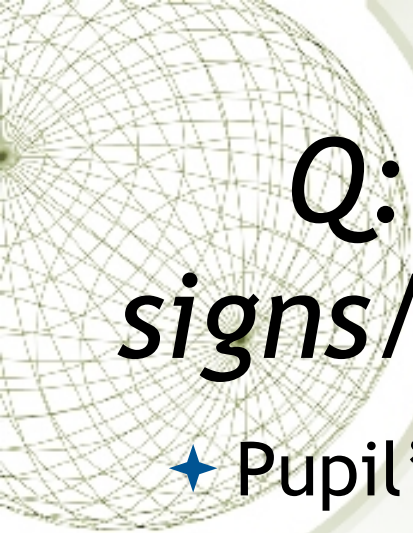
The English possessive

- ★ **Singular:** apostrophe precedes the “s”
 - ★ The boy’s hat; the cat’s whiskers; the Queen’s English; all the King’s horses and all the King’s men
- ★ **Plural but not ending in “s”:** ditto
 - ★ The children’s playground; the women’s movement
- ★ **Regular plural (ending in “s”):** apostrophe follows the “s”
 - ★ The boys’ hats (more than one boy)
- ★ **Fine points:**
 - ★ Ancient names ending in “s”: apostrophe follows
 - ★ Achilles’ Last Stand (any Led Zeppelin fans out there?)
 - ★ Modern names ending in “s”: “’s” follows
 - ★ Keats’s poems; Bridget Jones’s Diary
 - ★ **Double possessive:**
 - ★ Elton John, a friend of the footballer’s, said last night ...

Possessive determiners (“my land”) and possessive pronouns (“this land of mine”)

Possessive determiner (cf. <i>smikhut</i> in Hebrew)	Possessive pronoun (cf. <i>sheli/shelkha/...</i>)
my our	mine ours
your your	yours yours
his their	his theirs
her their	hers theirs
its [not “it’s”] their	its theirs
[Obsolete] thy	thine


Native Hebrew-speakers, be careful with this one!



Q: What's wrong with these signs/announcements/phrases?

- ★ Pupil's Entrance
- ★ Giant Kid's Playground
- ★ Group head's meeting
- ★ Fan's fury caused by Rolling Stone's concert cancellation

- ★ BUT: "The chemist's English" is correct
 - ★ "the chemist" here does not indicate one specific chemist, but rather refers to "anyone trained as a chemist and/or practicing chemistry"



Omission of letters in informal speech and writing

- ★ We're home (**we are**)
- ★ It's five o'clock (**it is five on the clock**)
- ★ That drummer, he's got rhythm (**he has got**)
- ★ Thank G-d it's Friday (TGIF)
- ★ No need for apostrophe in contractions that have become part of common English: pram (perambulator), fridge (refrigerator), photo (photograph), cello (violoncello)



Its ≠ it's [!!!]

- ★ Probably the single most irritating grammatical error to anybody who loves the English language for its own sake. Examples:
 - ✦ “Good food at it’s best” [I have enough already.]
 - ✦ “Judge a tree from it’s fruit.” [Indeed.]
- ★ **Very simple rule that works 100% of the time:**
 - ✦ If “it*s” can be replaced by “it is” or “it has” without altering the meaning of the sentence, write “it’s”
 - ✦ In all other cases, write “its”



Related

- ★ If you can replace “who*s” with “who is” or “who has”, then it’s “who’s”
 - ✦ Who’s that knocking on my door?
- ★ In all other cases, write “whose”
 - ✦ Whose line is this anyway?
- ★ “Ones” [plural of “one”] ≠ “One’s”
 - ✦ The young ones
 - ✦ A room of one’s own
- ★ “their” ≠ “They’re” [short for “they are”]
- ★ “your” ≠ “You’re” [short for “you are”]



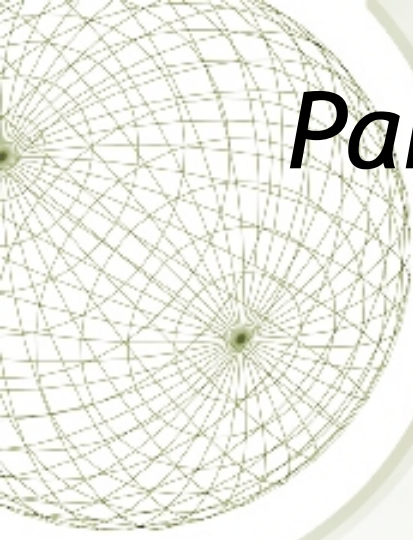
Punctuation and references (not in Lynne Truss's book)

- ★ Superscript reference style: punctuation before.
 - ✦ ... exemplamine has previously been isolated.¹² It was first synthesized by Nebbich,^{13,14} following an abortive attempt at making quelconquic acid.¹⁵
- ★ “Square brackets” reference style: punctuation after.
 - ✦ ... exemplamine has previously been isolated [12]. It was first synthesized by Nebbich [13,14], following an abortive attempt at making quelconquic acid [15].



Brackets, brackets, brackets

- ★ Round brackets (US: parentheses)
- ★ Square brackets [US: brackets]
- ★ Brace brackets {US: braces}
- ★ Angle brackets <used in linguistics and some other specialties>



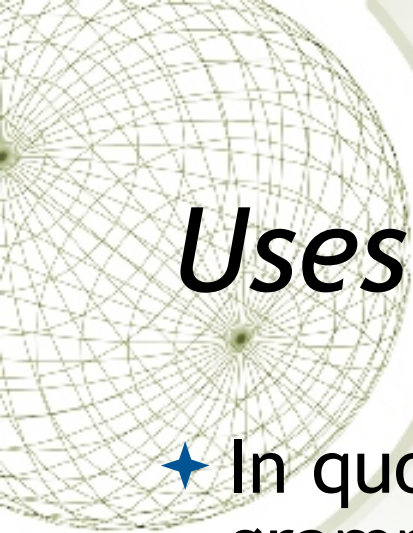
*Parentheses: add information,
clarify, explain, illustrate.
Also used for authorial asides*

- ★ Tom Jones (1749) was considered such a lewd book that, when two earthquakes occurred in London in 1750, Fielding's book was blamed for them.
- ★ Starburst (formerly known as Opal Fruits) are available in all corner shops.
- ★ Robert Maxwell [born Jan Ludvik Hoch, ed.] wasn't dead yet (he was still suing people.)



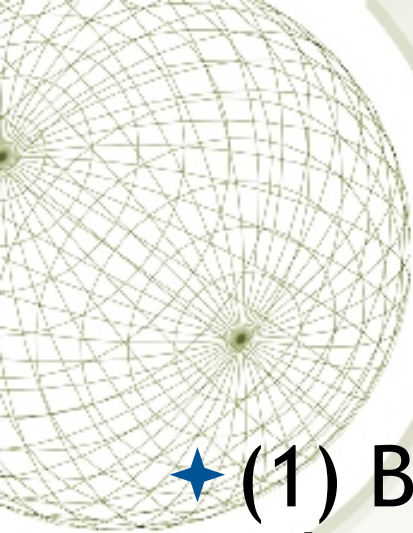
Square brackets: editorial

- ★ Adding omitted words without actually changing quoted text
- ★ Adding explanations essential to make quotation intelligible
- ★ Surrounding paraphrases or condensations of the original wording
- ★ Surrounding ellipses [...] and “sic”



Uses of “[sic]” (Latin: “thus”)

- ★ In quotations, next to obvious spelling or grammatical mistakes, to make it clear these were in the original and are not typos
 - ★ She wrote, asking for “a packet of Starbust [*sic*]”
- ★ The “I’m not making this up” *sic*
 - ★ “Serial killer Nick Slaughter [*sic*], having been sentenced to death by Judge Noose [*sic*], was hanged at dawn by prison warden Ami Talian [*sic*].”
- ★ The “this is not a typo but a pun” *sic*
 - ★ “He said: the website will only open in Microzift [*sic*] Internet Exploder.”
 - ★ “Such a dreadful ignoranus [*sic*].”



Uses of the semicolon:

- ★ (1) Between two related sentences where there is no conjunction such as “and” or “but”, and where a comma would be ungrammatical.

- ★ *I love Opal Fruits; they are now called Starburst, of course.*

- ★ *I remember him when he couldn't write his own name on a gate; now he's Prime Minister.*



Uses of the semicolon (2)

★ (2) “Special Policeman” (Yasamnik) in the event of comma fights.

★ *Fares were offered to Corfu, the Greek island, Morocco, Elba, in the Mediterranean, and Paris. Margaret thought about it. She had been to Elba once and had found it dull, to Morocco, and found it too colorful.* **[AND TOO CONFUSING, TOO]**

★ *Fares were offered to Corfu, the Greek island; Morocco; Elba, in the Mediterranean; and Paris. Margaret thought about it. She had been to Elba once and had found it dull; to Morocco, and found it too colorful.*

★ (3) Linking words such as “however,” “nevertheless,” “also”, “consequently” and “hence” require a semicolon.



Uses of the colon

- ★ H.W. Fowler: the colon “delivers the goods that have been invoiced in the preceding words”
 - ✦ Count Blarney could not speak: he was drunk.
- ★ G.B. Shaw: use colon between two statements if second statement reaffirms, explains, or illustrates the first
 - ✦ In US English: 1st word of 2nd statement often capitalized
- ★ Lynne Truss: colon nearly always preceded by complete sentence. In its simplest usage, theatrically announces what is to come:
 - ✦ *This much is clear, Watson: it was the baying of an enormous hound.* (Arthur Conan Doyle)



Additional uses of the colon

- ★ Fulcrum between two antithetical statements
 - ★ *Man proposes: G-d disposes.*
- ★ To “pull up” the reader for a nice surprise:
 - ★ *I find fault with only three things in this story of yours, Jenkins: the beginning, the middle and the end.*
- ★ Colons start lists (especially lists using semicolons):
 - ★ *In later life, Kerry-Anne found there were three qualities she disliked in other people: Britishness; superior airs; and a feigned lack of interest in her dusting of freckles.*



Additional uses of the colon

- ★ Colons set off book, film, album,... subtitles from the main titles:
 - ★ Rocky XIII: The Rye and the Kaiser
- ★ Conventionally, colons separate dramatic characters from dialogue
 - ★ *Philip: Kerry-Anne! Hold still! You've got some gunk on your face!*
 - ★ *Kerry-Anne: They're freckles, Philip. How many more times?*