



The Exclamation Point!

From the founder of National Punctuation Day®
and Punctuation Playtime®

www.PunctuationPlaytime.com jeff@punctuationplaytime.com
(877) 588-1212, toll-free number



NATIONAL PUNCTUATION DAY®

“A celebration of the lowly comma, correctly used quotation marks, and other proper uses of periods, semicolons, and the ever-mysterious ellipsis.”

Featured in Chase's Calendar of Events



8th National Punctuation Day September 24, 2011

The 8th annual celebration of National Punctuation Day will be on a Saturday this year, giving teachers across the world a great opportunity to assign students to take photos of outrageously erroneous punctuation on signs, such as the one at the top of page 2, generously submitted by Sarah Burnham Swett, a patron at Deb's Diner in Waldoboro, ME.

As we do every year, National Punctuation Day will feature a contest for a box of punctuation goodies. This year's contest: **Write one paragraph, maximum of three sentences, using these 13 punctuation marks: apostrophe, brackets, colon, comma, dash, ellipsis, exclamation point, hyphen, parentheses, period, question mark, quotation mark, and semicolon.**

Last year 356 people—from the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Italy (in Italian!)—submitted more than 3,000 haikus. Judges selected the top 25 punctuation haikus, which are posted on the **National Punctuation Day** website.

Teachers: Send us photos of your NPD classroom celebrations and students' contest entries. We'll post the best on our website.

Teachers' comments about Punctuation Playtime®

(See page 10 for program information)

“We learned more in 45 minutes than I could teach in five hours!”

— J.G. LAROCLETTE, CORONADO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, RICHMOND, CA —

“Wow! This was truly meaningful and exciting for all!”

— MRS. TURNER, GOV. GEORGE CLINTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, POUGHKEEPSIE, NY —



So many here from which to choose! This lovely sign can be found at a wonderful little restaurant called Deb's Diner in Waldoboro, Maine. Thankfully the cooking is much better than the punctuation!

Your's, (haha)

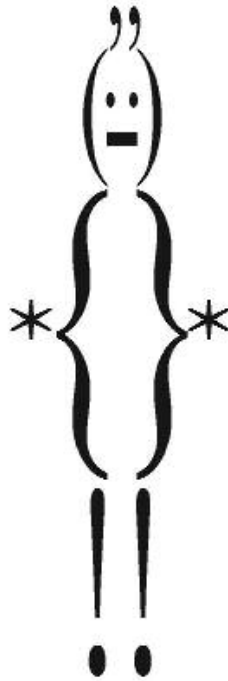
Sarah Burnham Swett

**Send us your photos and we will post them
in our “Wall of Shame” gallery on the
NPD website**

PUNCTUATION IN THE CLASSROOM

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY TUTORS CELEBRATE NATIONAL PUNCTUATION DAY WITH STUDENTS AND COLLEAGUES

Is punctuation an alien concept?



I come in peace.

Hello, my name is Stacie Pritchett, and I am an English tutor at New Mexico State University at Alamogordo. I was excited when I found your website, because it is fun and contains concise information about punctuation.

The other English tutors loved it too, so we decided to celebrate National Punctuation Day at the Academic Support Center. I made up flyers with this image of an alien to advertise it. The New Mexico Museum of Space History is right next to our campus, and Alamogordo is not too far from Roswell, I thought this alien would be an appropriate spokesman.

I also put him on the cover of pamphlets we made for the students, citing “nationalpunctuationday.com.” The pamphlets contain the information from your website on the punctuation marks and how to use them.

I made the packets in alternating colors of paper, stapled them together, and punched holes for 3-ring binders so the students could carry the information with them. The pamphlets spread around campus, and a communications professor ran in asking, “Where are they?” She took a bunch of copies for her students, so I made a bunch more. We are celebrating Punctuation Day this semester too, because we couldn't wait until September.

Please feel free to use this image as you see fit.

Thank you for your time,

Stacie Pritchett
stacie@nmsu.edu

Note to readers: Please credit Stacie Pritchett when using the punctuation alien.

THE ROAD SIGNS OF WRITING, READING

Editor's note: This article appeared in the September 28, 2010, edition of the Morning Sentinel, in Augusta, Maine.

Morning Sentinel

By Colin Hickey

I'm embarrassed. National Punctuation Day occurred last Friday, and I, an English teacher no less, missed the observation—entirely.

But then maybe that is just as well. National Punctuation Day, sad to say, is no celebration, not these days. In this, the age of texting and Tweeting, a day devoted to the comma and its brethren amounts to a National Day of Mourning.

Rest assured, though, this will not be a rant about how a lazy, undisciplined, non-reading generation can't tell a colon from a semicolon, even though the latter complaint—the colon-semicolon issue—is hard to rebut.

Lazy and undisciplined, though, is unfair. I don't blame teenagers for confusing colons for semicolons, forsaking the comma and ignoring "the apostrophe. They simply are responding to today's societal values and among the most highly esteemed values, if not No. 1, is speed.

Watch a teenager text on a cell phone sometime and this becomes apparent. His or her fingers are a blur, a lightning quick collection of digits rat-a-tatting out information with a missionary's zeal. From a young age, the importance of speed is programmed into our children. They learn that getting rich quick is part of the American dream. They learn that computers have to be fast in order to be good. They learn that the daily news cycle is a whirlwind and that stories need to be updated constantly to keep them fresh and relevant.

In this worldview, the stories found in the morning print newspaper are ancient history and those who consume their news from such sources are relics from a bygone era.



Which takes me back to punctuation.

Periods, colons, semicolons and commas are the road signs of writing and reading, signs that tell us to stop or slow down. But slow down is not in harmony with speed up.

Old-fashioned grammatical rules don't register to a generation raised on new age digital devices. Does a teenager want to be slowed down by periods, semicolons and commas? Please. This is like asking whether a teenager would prefer boiled broccoli over a double cheeseburger with large fries.

So, alas, nobody should be surprised that National Punctuation Day came and went not with a bang but with a whimper. This does not mean, however, that we should resign ourselves to this situation.

The truth is that punctuation does matter. We need road signs in writing and reading as much as we need traffic lights and stop signs on our roads. To do

otherwise invites chaos. We need periods and commas so that our sentences don't crash and clash and cause injury to meaning and clarity.

Therefore, I plan to celebrate National Punctuation Day next year. I will tell my friends about the event and encourage them to join me. I will not rest until I see concern for the comma begin to build. I have no choice. The stakes could not be higher. This is about survival of the English language.

— Colin Hickey is an English teacher in Regional School Unit 18. His e-mail address is differentwrinkle@yahoo.com.

Mary Ready first journalist to write about 2011 holiday



Mary Ready of Destin, FL, is a twice-retired English teacher. Her columns are published on Saturdays in the theDestinlog.com.

For the rest of this article, visit [A punctilious punctuator's pet peeves](#)

COLUMN: A punctilious punctuator's pet peeves

July 15, 2011 3:30 PM

[Mary Ready, Ready or Not](#)

I am very proud of the recent statewide awards won by The Destin Log. I can say this without bias because I am not a staff member, nor do I get paid for the nonsense I write every Saturday. Far from being just a fish wrapper or a doggie discipline device, The Log is an excellent newspaper in my unsolicited opinion.

As a retired English teacher, I'm most proud of the coherent writing and attention to grammar exhibited in Log articles. That's a tough thing to accomplish. I proofread my own stuff over, and over, and over before I press "send." But even after I submit a column, I will still catch an error that makes me cringe. Not to worry, Ms. Pam has also caught it and corrects it before I can send my revision.

So, I'm not grammatically holier than thou. I'm not a good speller, and I'm fond of fragments, especially in conversational writing. And I've noticed I use too many passive voice verb structures. Worse, I confess to verbosity.

I've recently learned there is a National Grammar Day on March 4. The theme for celebrating the occasion is "March forth to speak well, write well, and help others do the same." March FORTH (get it?). And yes, I know 4th is written FOURTH. I like homophones.

National Punctuation Day is Sept. 24. It's a day set aside to call attention to declining standards in the English language. In response, Washington Post columnist Gene Weingarten writes that it's too late for remedy, having recently declared our language "dead" and recommending we all learn Spanish. But even Spanish grammar has its quirks.

If you're not ready to bury English yet, then join me and Jeff Rubin, the man behind the Punctuation Day observance, on a quest to save our national language from the damage done by emails, texting and tweeting. Here's a sample checklist of grammatical irritants to inspire you.

The misuse of it's and its; there, their, and they're; to, too, and two; your and you're; effect and affect; then and than; and accept and except.

The misspelling of congratulations (no d); a lot (NOT alot); and weird and weigh (i before e except after c does not apply here).

Ignorance of commas: Smoking pets and skateboarders are prohibited. (Advise your dog to give up the cigarettes.)

Suspicious apostrophes: We sell "fresh" sandwiches. (Beware of Salmonella.)

Unnecessary apostrophes: Apple's for sale, no public restroom's (an apostrophe does not a plural make)

Missing apostrophes: Lets go to Uncle Leroy's house.

I could go on.



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PUNCTUATION ON THE WEB

A sampling of punctuation articles on the Internet

RAGAN'S
PR Daily

Most chivalrous punctuation mark ever: The em dash

By Laura Hale Brockway | Posted: July 6, 2011

For more than three decades, **Lawrence Ragan Communications, Inc.**, has been the leading publisher of corporate communications, public relations, and leadership development newsletters.

Ever since the launch of *The Ragan Report* in 1970, Ragan has provided the professional communicator and executives with timely, practical, and relevant information that few others can match.

The Ragan brand now includes over 16 targeted newsletters in the areas of employee communication, organizational writing and editing, sales and marketing, media relations and motivational management.

In addition to its newsletter division, Ragan produces several communications conferences, workshops, and senior-level forums throughout the United States. Ragan conferences draw more than 3,000 professionals annually and provide attendees with access to leading communicators, best practices, and rich networking opportunities.

Lawrence Ragan Communications is named for its founder, the dean of organizational communicators. With Lawrence Ragan's death in 1995, his son Mark Ragan—now CEO and Publisher—leads the 50-person firm.

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In the book *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, plucky Lynne Truss describes punctuation as "a courtesy designed to help readers to understand a story without stumbling."

With this in mind, I would name the em dash as the most chivalrous punctuation mark of all time.

As I often explain to punctuation newbies, em dashes (or long dashes) are used to indicate a *pronounced* interruption or break in thought. They should be used sparingly and only when another punctuation mark (such as a comma or colon) will not suffice. For example:

- Em dashes can be used when you want to introduce additional information in a sentence, but you don't want to set it off with commas or parenthesis. "My piano teacher—an exceptionally patient woman—was visibly agitated by my ham-fisted playing."
- Em dashes can also be used to separate a pronoun from what it refers to. "Mr. Harris is the perfect gentleman—articulate, charming, and handsome."
- Em dashes can also be used to convey a more emphatic aside. "Your brother—no matter what he says—cannot make you unconscious just by looking at you."

**For the rest of this article, visit
Most chivalrous punctuation mark ever: The em dash**

PUNCTUATION ON THE WEB

A sampling of punctuation articles on the Internet

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Sapphire, author of 'Push'



Home

10 things you might not know about punctuation

There was big news on the punctuation front a few weeks ago: an unfounded rumor that the Oxford University Press was getting rid of the "serial comma." That's the final comma in a series, as used in most books but few newspapers. (The Tribune would write "blood, sweat and tears"; most books would write "blood, sweat, and tears.") If the uproar confounds you, read on:

Recommend 23 Tweet 22 Share 55 Comments 5



Onetime New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia would smack down a smooty bureaucrat by calling him "semicolon boy." (Keystone, Getty Images / July 18, 2011)

By Mark Jacob and [Stephan Benzkofer](#)

12:22 p.m. CDT, July 18, 2011

First of all, let's explain why the serial comma is important to some people. A blog on [economist.com](#) cites an apocryphal example: "I'd like to thank my parents, [Ayn Rand](#) and God." Without a comma after "Rand," the writer has a mighty unusual parentage.

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For the rest of this article, visit [10 things you might not know about punctuation](#)

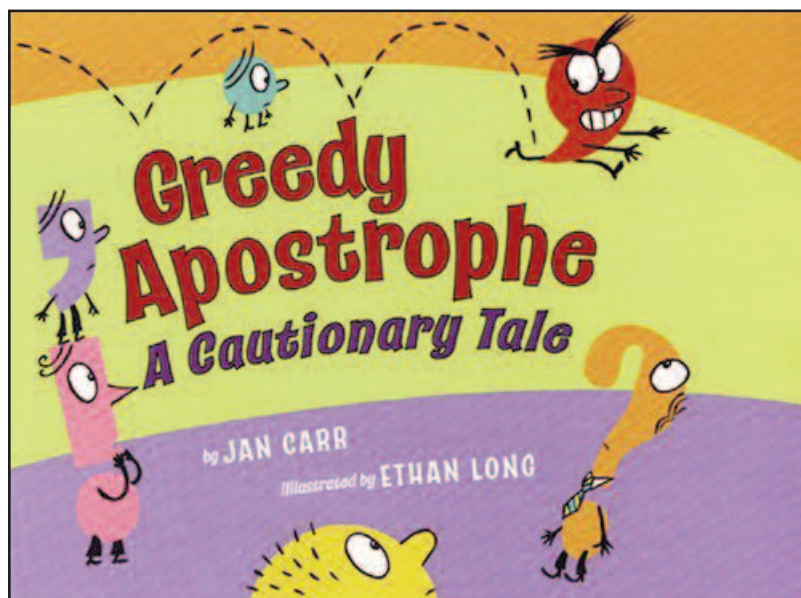
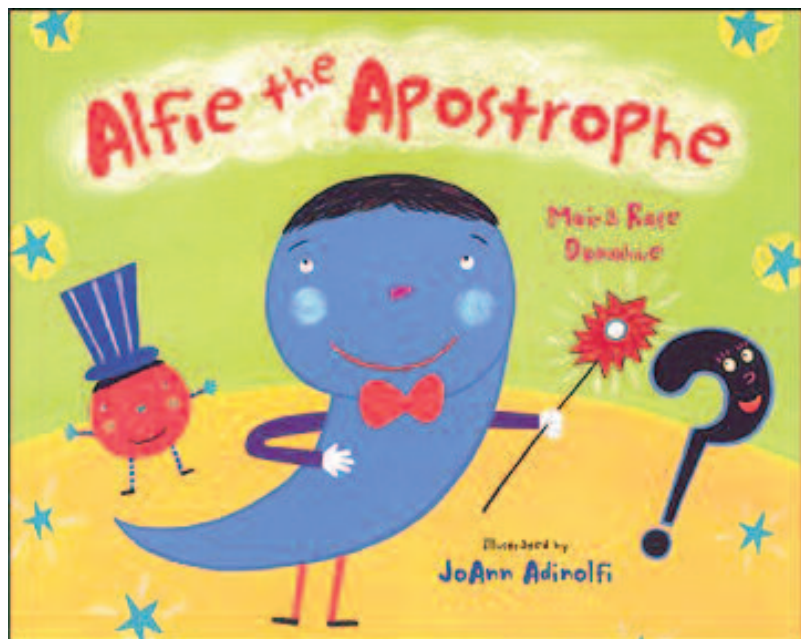


Two children's books tell engaging stories about apostrophes.

Review of *Alfie the Apostrophe*

Grades 1-3. When various young punctuation marks try out for a school talent show, director Mr. Asterisk clearly enjoys the question marks' jokes and riddles and the exclamation points' cheerleading acrobatics. He nearly overlooks quiet Alfie—until the little apostrophe sets up his magic act on stage. Alfie shows his mettle with a series of amazing tricks, making letters disappear and closing the gap between Dot and her doll. Donohue takes a basic plot and embellishes it with sly bits of punctuation-mark-based humor and even a bit of ancient history (the etymology of the word apostrophe). The eye-catching mixed-media illustrations feature bright, bold shapes and demonstrate a certain verve reminiscent of children's own artwork. Teachers will be quick to see classroom potential in this picture book, with its uncommon subject and energetic presentation. *Carolyn Phelan*

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Review for *Greedy Apostrophe*

Grades 1-3. In this zany tale of a problem with some apostrophes, the Director of Punctuation, an austere-looking felt-tip marker, calls all the punctuation marks to order at their job-assignment meeting. Of all those present, only Greedy Apostrophe refuses to recite the Punctuation Oath. Disaster strikes when he is given the last assignment—to show possession. He “was always getting in trouble with possession!” Though he listens to the explanation of appropriate usage, he runs amok when he enters the store, misapplying apostrophes to signs for puppets (“puppet’s”), marbles (“marble’s”), and yo-yos (“yo-yo’s”) and confusing the customers. Clever children at the school across the street quickly spot the mistakes, but Greedy Apostrophe eludes them and remains at large. The expressions on Long’s bright and quirky punctuation people will delight early elementary listeners.

— *School Library Journal*



NATIONAL PUNCTUATION DAY®

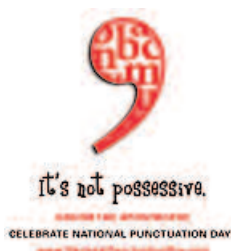


September 24

CELEBRATE PROPER PUNCTUATION WITH OUR UNIQUE PRODUCTS

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- Punctuation posters •

T-SHIRTS AND GREETING CARDS featuring these designs



PUNCTUATION POSTERS

Set of 4 full-color posters for teachers and parents, featuring definitions and correct usage of 13 punctuation marks.

VISIT WWW.NATIONALPUNCTUATIONDAY.COM FOR LARGER IMAGES AND ORDERING INFORMATION. WE ACCEPT MAJOR CREDIT CARDS.

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“Your program completely supports our curriculum content. You have wrapped up the best in teaching to bring to our students. I love the fact that you are not afraid to teach young children great skills!”

— SALLY FELDMAN, WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, POINT RICHMOND, CA —



Punctuation Playtime®

**THE ASSEMBLY PROGRAM THAT TEACHES
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS PUNCTUATION
IN A FUN AND ENGAGING WAY**

Punctuation is FUN!

**Punctuation is important in helping children
learn to read and write with clarity**

L EARNING IS EASIER WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN, AND WE HAVE A LOT OF FUN," says Jeff Rubin, co-creator of Punctuation Playtime®, and founder of National Punctuation Day®.

Jeff and his wife, Norma Martínez-Rubin, facilitate the 45-minute program of non-stop activities, games, and punctuation learning.

Punctuation Playtime® takes a subject that children might roll their eyes at and makes it an engaging, enjoyable, and memorable learning experience.



Jeff and Norma believe that reaching children at the beginning of their scholastic careers is critical in helping them develop the reading and writing skills that will be a key not only to their academic success, but also to their professional success as adults.

Games such as The Punctuation Relay and Pin the Punctuation Mark on the Sentence reinforce the program's important punctuation lessons.

Students learn best when they have FUN! The children will remember this program — and the lessons they learned — for a lifetime!

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(877) 588-1212, TOLL FREE**

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Understanding the rules of punctuation helps children learn to read and comprehend what they read. Statistics show that students who read well do better in school, get better jobs, earn more money, and live more satisfying and productive lives.”

JEFF RUBIN, FOUNDER, PUNCTUATION PLAYTIME®

Punctuation Playtime®

Facilitators



Jeff Rubin, founder of **Punctuation Playtime®** and **National Punctuation Day®**, is The Newsletter Guy, owner of the Pinole, CA-based newsletter publishing firm of the same name (www.thenewletterguy.com).

Jeff has written and designed more than 1,800 newsletters for companies in a wide variety of industries since beginning his business in 1981.

Previously, Jeff was a newspaper reporter, columnist, and editor for papers in New York, Connecticut, Illinois, and California. His freelance articles have appeared in *Family Weekly*, *Runner's World*, *Basketball Weekly*, *Consulting Today*, and *Professional Speaker* magazines.

Jeff is a professional speaker (www.JeffRubinSpeaks.com) and a former member of the National Speakers Association. He speaks about marketing, integrity, and customer service for owners of small businesses.



Norma Martínez-Rubin is a veteran of EAST BAY IMpRoV classes and a born laughter. She has a gentle way with children, dogs, and her husband, Jeff.

Norma holds an MPH from UCLA and an MBA from John F. Kennedy University, in Pleasant Hill, CA.

Norma owns Evaluation Focused Consulting (www.evaluationfocused.com), which conducts health program evaluations for foundations, health maintenance organizations, and corporations with community benefit interests. She provides a high level of qualitative data that enables her clients to maximize the effectiveness of their community health initiatives.



Punctuation Playtime® praised by Teachers' Choice Award panel

We entered the Punctuation Playtime® instructional DVD for teachers in the 2008 Teachers' Choice Award competition sponsored by Learning Magazine. While the DVD did not win an award

(only 15% of the entries win), the DVD got very positive comments from the panel of teachers that reviewed it. Here's a sampling of those comments:

WHAT ASPECTS OF THIS PRODUCT DID YOU LIKE THE MOST?

- I like the reinforcement of punctuation outside of a textbook lesson. Also, the suggestions could easily be used for an observational evaluation of lessons.
- I liked the supplemental materials that came with it. I like the songs.
- Using an assembly program is a cute way of introducing students to a difficult concept.
- I like the idea of using music to introduce the topic of punctuation.
- The students at the assembly seemed to be having a really good time. I liked the interactive games. I liked the two songs that came with the program to teach punctuation. It is certainly a different way to approach a curriculum piece.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THIS PRODUCT?

- I learned that too often I forget to re-teach and enhance lessons with activities. It doesn't take much money or time to follow up a lesson with one of these activities.



- Students can learn about subject matter in different ways. In this case, the use of an assembly program may pique their interest in punctuation.
- The use of games and activities help make teaching the topic of punctuation fun.
- Students were actively engaged with interactive games and activities.

HOW WILL YOU APPLY INFORMATION FROM THE PRODUCT IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

- I will integrate the punctuation posters with my English series I am already using.

- Many (of this program's) ideas could be used in other curriculum as enhancement and re-teaching. I would use products they can do on their own, at their own desks.
- I will incorporate some of the games demonstrated in the video.

IF FUNDS WERE AVAILABLE, WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THIS PRODUCT TO A TEACHER AT THE APPROPRIATE GRADE/AGE LEVEL?

- Yes. The ideas presented were good, solid grammar rules.
- If a school/PTA had money to pay for this program it looks like it could be lots of fun for students.
- If a school had extra funds, it would be fun to have Mr. Rubin come and do an assembly program.
- The games and activities provided on the CD could be put to use in the classroom for students in grades 1-6.
- If a PTA had funds to purchase this program, I'd recommend it.

See page 13 for ordering information.

How we help young students learn about punctuation

Learning is easier when children are having fun, and they have a lot of fun with **Punctuation Playtime®**. We facilitate a 45-minute program of non-stop activities, games, and punctuation learning. **Punctuation Playtime®** takes a subject that children might roll their eyes at and makes it an engaging, enjoyable, and memorable learning experience.

We believe that reaching children at the beginning of their scholastic careers is critical in helping them develop the reading and writing skills that will be key

not only to their academic success, but also to their professional success as adults.

The children will remember the lessons they learned in this program for a lifetime!

Punctuation Playtime® meets Language Arts state standards.

Book us now for fall 2011 and spring 2012 programs.

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Two ways to get **Punctuation Playtime®**



Pin the Punctuation Mark on the Sentence—here at Roundout Elementary School, north of Chicago—is one of the most popular Punctuation Playtime® activities.

1 **Book us for programs**
We love working with young students. Please call us about coming to your school.
Call us toll-free at **(877) 588-1212**, or e-mail Jeff at Jeff@PunctuationPlaytime.com.

2 **Purchase our instructional DVD**
We also offer the program to schools and libraries as a training DVD. It takes teachers and facilitators step by step through our activities and learning objectives so they can replicate the program in their classrooms and assemblies.

The DVD can be shared for cooperative teaching. Several grades in one school can learn important writing and literacy skills. Teachers and facilitators can reinforce and support each other. It's a great value!

With either option, you'll receive a CD with:

- A Teachers' Activity Kit (12 punctuation activities)
- A Kids' Activity Kit (23 punctuation activities to be done individually and with parents)
- A set of four, 4-color punctuation posters for the teacher to hang in his/her classroom
- The Punctuation Rap® music and lyrics
- The sentences for Pin the Punctuation Mark on the Sentence.

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