Writing Center WORKSHOP EVALUATION. Please take the time to fill this out; you can hand it in at the end of the workshop or leave it in Academic Success. Thanks again.

WORKSHOP: ___Punctuation_____ DATE:

1. Something I enjoyed about today’s workshop:

2. The most important thing I learned in the workshop:

3. Would you change something to improve the workshop for next time?

4. General comments about presenter or workshop . . .
PUNCTUATION WORKSHOP

COMMA

SEMI-COLON

COLON

APOSTROPHEs (for personal review)

PUNCTUATION WITHIN QUOTATIONS (for personal review)

EM DASHES (for personal review)

The Costly Comma
Punctuation Workshop

COMMAS, SEMICOLONS, COLONS & APOSTROPHES.

I. Commas

RULE 1: USE COMMAS TO SET OFF NONRESTRICTIVE ELEMENTS IN A SENTENCE.
A nonrestrictive phrase or clause is one that, if removed from the sentence, will not change its meaning. It gives additional description or information that is incidental to the central meaning of the sentence.

In the examples below, note that both sentences are grammatically correct, but that the use of commas changes their meaning.

Examples

Non restrictive: The meeting, which starts at 10 a.m., is about the Matthews case. (The time is incidental to the meaning. The writer has already identified the meeting referred to.)

Restrictive: The meeting that starts at 10 a.m. is about the Matthews case. (In this sentence, the meeting is one of several and is identified or restricted by the time. So “that starts at 10 a.m.” is a restrictive phrase.)

Non restrictive: Attorneys, who intentionally prolong litigation for personal gain, misuse the legal system. (This sentence says that all attorneys misuse the legal system.)

Restrictive: Attorneys who intentionally prolong litigation for personal gain misuse the legal system. (The phrase “who intentionally prolong litigation for personal gain” restricts the class of attorneys who misuse the legal system.)

A word or phrase next to a noun that further describes it is frequently non-restrictive.

Non restrictive: Luke Skywalker, a well respected Jedi Knight, played a vital role in destroying the Death Star. (“Luke Skywalker” is not further restricted by the phrase “a well respected Jedi Knight.”)

But such descriptive phrases may be restrictive when it provides specific identification.
**Restrictive:** The Jedi who uses the purple light saber nearly killed the Emperor. (“With the purple light saber” specifically identifies – restricts – the Jedi, so we can know which Jedi nearly killed the Emperor.)

Sometimes the punctuation may depend on the situation. If I have only one sister, then:

**Non restrictive:** My sister, Rachel, is a lawyer. (Because I have only one sister, “Rachel” is not necessary to identify “my sister.” Compare with “My sister is a lawyer.”)

But if I have two sisters, Rachel and Emily, then “My sister is a lawyer.” does not give enough information to identify which sister is a lawyer.

**Restrictive:** My sister Rachel is a lawyer. (Because “Rachel” is necessary to identify which sister we are referring to.)

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**Rule 1: Restrictive and Non Restrictive Exercises**

In the following sentences, identify the restrictive or non restrictive elements and punctuate according to the information in parentheses.

1. The book that/which is on the bureau is mine. (There is more than one book)

2. The getaway car that/which was pock-marked with rust was parked in my driveway. (There is only one getaway car)

3. The girl who is picking flowers is in love. (There is more than one girl)

4. The detective who smelled strongly of tobacco took down my statement. (There is only one detective)

5. A box of legal documents dating from the 19th Century had been stored in the courthouse attic for generations. (There is more than one box of legal documents stored in the attic.)

6. The exhibit which/that proves my argument is very complicated. (There is only one exhibit)

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**Rule 2: Use commas after an introductory clause or phrase.**
Introductory matter may be a single word of transition <Obviously>, a phrase <On the other hand>, or a dependent clause <If we can agree on the price>.

A) After introductory clauses which tell *when, where, how, why, or under what conditions*.

- When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.
- Next door, the noise was growing louder.
- Almost inaudibly, the witness described the crime scene.
- Because he couldn’t tell the truth, he refused to testify.
- Since the company refused to settle, we instructed our attorneys to sue.

B) After participial phrases which describe the noun or pronoun immediately following them.

- Using wiretap technology, the detectives acquired enough information to make the arrest.

C) After introductory phrases (which tell us *when, where, why, how, or under what conditions something happens*).

- “If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” – George Orwell

D) After verbals (verb forms used as another part of speech).

- Wishing to clarify, the witness repeated himself.

E) *Exception: Use no comma if these phrases come at the end of a sentence.*

- Because it was a cold night, we took refuge before a roaring fire, *versus* We took refuge before a roaring fire because it was a cold night.

F) *Exception:*

   In short introductory phrases, if understanding is not compromised, the comma may be omitted;

   ➞ If the subject of the first verb is the subject of the second, no comma is necessary.

1. In no time we reached the top.
2. Alisa *brought* the injured bird home and *fashioned* a splint out of Popsicle sticks for its wing.

*Rule 2: Introductory phrase exercises: place commas if needed.*
1. When the runaway race car crashed the gas tank exploded.

2. As the concert began we heard a tremendous explosion.

3. During an extended recess in the beautiful garden the parties reached an agreement.

4. Whenever you want we can complete the forms.

5. Juan walked to the witness stand with casual elegance.

RULE 3: USE A COMMA BEFORE A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION JOINING TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES.

Coordinating conjunctions are For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So (remember FANBOYS). Examples:

- The defendant wept during the cross-examination, but the jury remained impassive.
- The prosecutor spoke about the defendant’s motive, and the jury listened carefully.
- The detainee had no alibi, so police held her for further questioning.

Exception: If the sentence is short and the meaning is clear without punctuation, omit the comma if you wish.
- It rained and it snowed
- The boy cried and his mother glared at me.

Exception: The subject of both clauses is the same.
- The boy cried hard and he was unable to speak.

Rule 3: Coordinating Conjunction exercise.
Remember FANBOYS and place commas where needed.

1. Many serial killers have appeared since Jack the Ripper but few have been as famous or as feared as he was.

2. Jane played the piano and Michael danced.

3. Are we really interested in helping the children or are we just trying to protect our good names?

4. The jury has not yet reached a verdict nor does it look like it will anytime soon.

5. I washed my hands and put nice smelling lotion on them.
RULE 4: USE A COMMA TO SEPARATE MORE THAN TWO ITEMS IN A SERIES; INCLUDE A COMMA BEFORE THE LAST “AND,” UNLESS TOLD TO DO DIFFERENTLY BY YOUR PROFESSOR. THE ITEMS MAY BE SINGLE WORDS, CLAUSES, VERB PHRASES, ETC.

Examples:

- The case went on so long that it drained them economically, ruined their relationship, and caused them both serious health problems that required hospitalization.
- Before accepting the case, the attorney consulted with her associates, investigated the client’s financial situation, and interviewed the client’s spouse.

NB1: Notice that in all the above examples the items in the series are parallel, that is to say they mirror each other in grammatical structure.

NB2: Be sure to be precise when deciding about comma use. In the following example, what portion of the property do each of the people mentioned receive?

Ms. Corsini wants her property divided equally among the following relatives: Michael Corsini, Glenda Corsini, Joanna Mitchem, Louis Mitchem, Donna Mitchem and Donald Mitchem.

Exception: Some adjective-noun combinations function as one word; don’t use a comma between them. For example:

1. The divorcing couple fought over who would get the antique pine writing desk.

Rule 4: Comma use in series exercises. Place commas where appropriate

1. My favorite sandwich is peanut butter and jelly.

2. The lawyer who communicates well with clients who files timely motions and who maintains good financial records reduces her risk of malpractice.

3. I like long-stemmed fine-crystal wine glasses.

4. As a child I was told to say “yes m'am and yes sir” “thank you and please” and “hello and goodbye” to all adults.

RULE 5A: USE A COMMA TO PREVENT POSSIBLE MISREADING.
This is a question of common sense. Examples:
1. While we were eating, the dogs escaped
2. Of the twenty, two witnesses are willing to testify.

**RULE 5B: USE A COMMA TO ENCLOSE PARENTHETICAL (ADDED OR INTERJECTED INFORMATION) PHRASES.** See example:
   1. His report, written under duress, was worthless.

**RULE 5c: USE A COMMA BETWEEN PARTS OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES, ADDRESSES, AND DATES.** See below:
   1. The climate in Leadville, Colorado, is invigorating.
   2. No. 10 Downing Street, London, England, is the dwelling of the British Prime Minister.
   3. On Wednesday, July 13, 1990, he left on vacation.

**RULE 5D: USE A COMMA TO SET OFF CONTRASTING ELEMENTS.** See below:
   1. I said I was happy about the verdict, not ecstatic.

**RULE 5E: USE A COMMA TO SET OFF AN APPOSITIVE (A NOUN THAT DIRECTLY FOLLOWS ANOTHER NOUN AND FURTHER DESCRIBES IT).** See below:
   1. Marion Howes, president of our company, has a contract to die for.
   2. An FCSL student, Jesus Garcia, won the award.

**RULE 5F: USE A COMMA TO SET OFF WORDS OF DIRECT ADDRESS, MILD INTERJECTIONS, YES AND NO, INTERROGATIVE TAGS.** See below:
   1. Alas, the world is indeed too much with us.
   2. Yes, the problem persists.
   3. It seems clear, doesn’t it?
   4. May I ask for an interpreter, Judge Golden?

**Rule 5: Exercises in use of comma to prevent misreadings; to set off parenthetical phrases, contrasting elements, and appositives; in geographical names, addresses, and dates; in direct address.**

Place commas correctly in the following.

1. If you want a court interpreter can help with the cross-examination.
2. While we were happy with the results the judge wasn’t.
3. The jury focused on the defendant’s guilt rather than on his repentance.
4. The only reason I am here if you want to know the truth is because I have to be.

5. You will won’t you?

6. I lived in Hermosa Beach California for six years.

7. In Manhattan on September 11 2001 a tragedy occurred which the world will never forget.

II. SEMICOLONS

Use the semicolon to connect major sentence elements of equal grammatical rank. Be careful not to overuse semicolon.

Put semicolons outside quotation marks unless they form part of the quote.

**Rule 1:** Use a semicolon between closely related independent clauses **not** joined with a coordinating conjunction (**FANBOYS**).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of writing</th>
<th>You can write</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Main Clause</em>, and <em>Main Clause</em></td>
<td><em>Main clause; main clause</em></td>
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Clause closely relate to each other

Examples:
1. Injustice is relatively easy to bear; what stings is justice.  – H.L. Mencken

2. When I was a boy I was told that anyone could become president; I’m beginning to believe it.  – Clarence Darrow

**Rule 2:** Use a semicolon between independent clauses linked with a transitional expression. Usually, these are preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma. (See table below for transitional expressions).

Examples:
1. Many corals grow very gradually; in fact, the creation of a coral reef can take centuries.

2. Most singers gain fame through hard work and dedication; Evita, however, found other means.
TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS

<table>
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<th>Conjunctive adverbs</th>
<th>Transitional Phrases</th>
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<td>Accordingly</td>
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<td>meanwhile</td>
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**Rule 3:** Use a semicolon between items in a series containing internal punctuation. See example below.

- The following legal educators joined interdisciplinary committee: Jeanette Dawson, dean of Valley Law School; Richard Riley, dean of Balfour Law School; and Gordon Grant, dean of Packard Law School.

**Rule 4:** Use semicolons between independent clauses if there are many commas within the clauses. See example below.

- The *Barrister*, a new legal journal, and one of the most original to appear in the past decade, advertised for an editorial cartoonist; and the applicants who responded, interestingly enough, were attorneys.

**Rules 1, 2, 3, & 4: Semicolon Exercises.** Place semicolons where needed (perhaps by replacing commas).

1. Thorndike’s permission to use his land was an oral license therefore he has the right to evoke the license to use his property.

2. The child’s father took her from her home by force and against the will of her mother consequently the court charged the defendant with kidnapping.
3. The first two elements are satisfied however the third element hostility is not satisfied.

4. Permission is a revocable act it does not ripen into a prescriptive right unless the user’s acts evidence a positive assertion of a right to use.

5. The reasonableness test includes several factors: the location of the business, the degree of interference with another business, and the test of sensibilities, that is, whether a person of ordinary sensibilities would be offended.

6. In order to expedite the insurance claim, we were requested to make a list of all items especially furniture and appliances that had been destroyed in the fire provide copies of all pertinent insurance papers and property deeds and get notarized statements, as complete as possible from all witnesses.

III. COLONS

The colon primarily to call attention to the words that follow it; in addition, the colon has some conventional uses.

Put colons outside quotation marks unless they form part of the quote.

**RULE 1:** USE A COLON AFTER AN INDEPENDENT CLAUSE TO DIRECT ATTENTION TO A LIST, AN APPOSITIVE, OR A QUOTATION. SEE EXAMPLES BELOW.

**A list**
- She gave away everything she owned: her clothes, her books, her furniture, and her art work.

**An appositive (which defines or elaborates what comes before it)**
- My roommate is guilty of two of the seven deadly sins: gluttony and sloth.

**A quotation,** especially long quotations
- Consider the words of John F. Kennedy: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

**RULE 2:** USE A COLON BETWEEN INDEPENDENT CLAUSES IF THE SECOND SUMMARIZES OR EXPLAINS THE FIRST.

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1 A quotation can also be introduced by a comma or no punctuation at all, whichever is appropriate in context. For example, a comma is used after expressions such as he said or she remarked. But: The report stated that she escaped “by squeezing through a tiny window.”
A referee must possess one basic qualification: she must be fair.

**RULE 3: USE A COLON AFTER THE FOLLOWING, AND AS FOLLOWS.**

- For the camping trip we were told to bring the following: a sleeping blanket, insect repellent, and a knife.

**RULE 4: DO NOT USE A COLON**

- after *such as, include/including, for example, namely, specifically*
- between a verb and its object or complement (example below)
  - Some important vitamins found in vegetables are vitamin A, thiamine, niacin, and vitamin C.
- between a preposition and its object (see below)
  - Our system of government consists of a judiciary, a legislative, and an executive branch.

**Rules 1, 2, 3, & 4: Exercises on use of colon.**
*Place or remove colon where necessary.*

1. The travel package includes: a round-trip ticket to Athens, a cruise through the Cyclades, and all hotel accommodations.
2. The jury found for the defendant for one reason *There was an evident lack of evidence.*
3. Carl Sandburg once asked three important questions “*Who paid for my freedom? What was the price? And am I somehow beholden?’*”
4. There was only one person who could answer for the boy’s whereabouts *the boy’s guardian.*
5. The doctor told me to avoid all sweets, such as: cookies, cakes, and candy.
6. He arrived at the shelter with: *his entire family, his two dogs, his DVD player, and an ice chest full of Snickers™.*

**I. APOSTROPHEs**

Apostrophes show possession, denote omitted words or letters, and (generally) form the plural of letters, figures, signs, or symbols.
A. **Rule**: Use –'s to indicate that a singular noun is possessive.
   Example: It is all in a day’s work.

B. **Rule**: If a noun is singular and ends in -s, add -'s to form the possessive.
   Example: Lois’s main complaint about her life is that it just goes on and on.

C. **Rule**: Do not add an additional apostrophe “s” if three sibilant sounds will result
   and/or distort the word.
   Example: Some are saying that Stephanie Spears’ newest song is plagiarized.

D. **Rule**: There should generally be no apostrophe after classical names if that would
   produce awkwardness.
   Example: He read every one of Sophocles’ plays for the exam only to discover that
   the exam covered Aristophanes’ plays instead.

E. **Rule**: If the plural of the noun ends in -s or -es just add the apostrophe (s’).
   Example: The briefcases’ locks didn’t hold, which proved to be very embarrassing
   because the briefcases were full of a white powdery substance.

F. **Rule** Individual vs. Joint Possession: To show individual possession, use -‘s or -s’
   with all nouns; to show joint possession, use -‘s or -s’ with the last noun.
   Example 1 (joint possession): Have you seen Joyce and Gene’s new quintuplets?
   Example 2 (individual): John’s and Marie’s expectations of marriage couldn’t have
   been more different.

G. **Rule** for Possession in **Compound Nouns**: If a noun is compound use –’s or -s’
   with the last element.
   Example 1: My sister-in-law’s main interest is sailing.
   Example 2: My Jack-in-the-pulpits’ leaves are turning yellow.
H. **Rule**: Use -'s to indicate that an indefinite pronoun is possessive.
   
   Example 1: Someone’s cell phone is ringing.
   Example 2: No one’s paper has been graded yet.
   Example 3: We do our best to see that each’s needs are met.

I. **Rule**: Use an Apostrophe to indicate the Omission of Letters in Contractions and the Omission of Numbers.
   
   Example: It’s a shame that Madonna can’t be a part of the ’07 Tour for World Peace.

J. **Rule**: Its, when possessive, never takes the apostrophe
   
   Example: The dog bit its master

K. **Rule**: The possessive form of who is whose; possessive pronouns (mine, yours, etc.) do not take an apostrophe.
   
   Example: Whose is this anyway, yours, mine, his, hers, or theirs?

L. **Rule**: Use ‘s to indicate the plural of letters, single-digit numbers, symbols, words used as words, and some abbreviations (esp. lower case ones & punctuated ones).
   
   Ex: Mind your p’s and q’s.
   Ex: How many O’s are there in a million? (Better: How many zeros . . .)
   Ex: What kind of mpg’s does this model get?
   Ex: How many J.D.’s were awarded?

M. **Rule**: With capitalized abbreviations, multiple-digit numbers, and dates, the preferred plural is a simple –s.
   
   Ex: You will escort the VIPs to the head table.
   Ex: The new attorney general cut his legal teeth as a Detroit prosecutor in the ‘80s.
   Ex: Lows tonight will be in the upper 30s.

   **Avoid confusion. Compare**: There are too many Is in this word, to There are too many I’s in this word. Or: The twenty multiple choice questions had twelve As in the answers, as opposed to twelve A’s.

   And now: Make the name Aristophanes plural _________, then possessive, ___________ and pronounce all the s’s (or is it “esses”?)
   This brings us to a convention which states we should avoid three or more es sounds. Also, in forming the possessive of foreign words the s after the apostrophe is usually omitted.
How’s life? Mine or yours?

**Exercises: Put apostrophes where needed or correct the apostrophe use:**

1. My brothers wives are sisters.
2. Marias and Eduardos claims both dealt with discrimination.
3. Who’s brief is that?
4. Mary and Jane’s children have two mothers.
5. If your dog isn’t eating it’s food, that’s your problem.
6. In the Basque language there are no Vs, Cs, Qs, Ws, Ys, or Js.
7. Siddhartha sat by the river and listened to its many voices.
9. Don’t look at each others papers.
10. Joe’s Sandwich Shop in Pittsburgh won’t serve anyone who doesn’t speak English.

**Punctuation within quotation marks.**

**Rule 1:** Commas and periods are always inside the quotation marks.

Example: “I don’t know,” John replied

Example: To grant the defendant another advantage would make the prosecutor’s task “almost insurmountable.”

**Rule 2:** Colons and semicolons go outside the quotation marks, even if the quoted material happens to have a semicolon or colon in that position.
Example: In order to formulate precise factual issues, a pleader had to state “facts,” not “conclusions”; and in order that the issues be material according to the substantive law, the stating of “evidence” was condemned.

Example: “The validity of the reporters’ claim of a First Amendment privilege not to disclose sources of information was decided on the results of two inquiries”: (1) were fears of sources drying up justified; and, if so, (2) does that loss outweigh the benefits of the testimony?

Rule 3: Question marks and exclamation marks go inside the quotation marks only when they are part of the quoted matter.

Example: Does the parol-evidence rule play a similar role in excluding evidence of prior negotiations to interpret contract language that is “clear on its face”?

Example: The court session opened with the traditional cry, “Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!”

Exercises for punctuation with quotation marks. Punctuate as needed:

- Hamlet’s words “To be or not to be, that is the question” have been asked untold numbers of times.
- What did the judge mean when he said “The plaintiff is in serious hot water”
- The answer, to quote May, “is in your heart” as Becky says, however, “You won’t find it if you don’t look”
- “You did what” asked the parole officer indignantly.
- “I’m fed up with you” the attorney exclaimed.
Em Dashes*

The em dash (also called a “long dash”) is a forceful and conspicuous punctuation mark. As wide as the typeface is tall, the em dash stands out on the page. It highlights what it either contains (when used in pairs) or separates from the main sentence. The same matter inside parentheses would be deemphasized. As a separator, the em dash often performs the pointing function of a colon, and the two marks are interchangeable in those situations. On a computer, type an em dash with a special code; on a typewriter, indicate it with two hyphens. In documents created on word processors, use a space before and after the em dash to prevent awkward line breaks – even though fine book typography omits the space. Although you may have once heard a stern warning against em dashes, they’re an important part of the writer’s toolbox. Just look at any page of first-rate published prose, and you’re going to see one or more irreplaceable dashes.

I. Use an em dash—or pair of em dashes as required by sentence structure—to give matter that is independent of the main sentence more emphasis than parentheses would provide.

a) Setting off words at beginning or end of sentence. Use an em dash to separate an element that is placed at the beginning or end of a sentence and expands on another part of the sentence. In this construction the dash is similar in function to a colon (at the beginning) or parentheses (at the end), abut more emphatic.

Example: Principle—that’s what’s at stake here.
Example: The most common problem of extra-record evidence occurs when there are ex parte contacts—communications outside the hearing and off the record from an interested party to a decision-making official.

b) In mid-sentence. Use a pair of em dashes instead of parentheses to set off parenthetical matter—even an independent sentence—inside the main sentence. While parentheses minimize what they enclose, em dashes emphasize it. Do not use a comma, semicolon, or colon before or after the em dashes, even if one would be necessary without the interrupting matter.

Example: Because an assignment for the benefit of creditors places the debtor’s property out of the reach of the creditors—legal title passes to the assignee—it might seem that creditors would be able to void the assignment under a fraudulent-conveyance statute. (The comma that would have been required where the first em dash appears is no longer necessary.)

c) With appositive. Use a pair of em dashes instead of commas to separate an appositive phrase, for the purpose of either (1) emphasizing it more or (2) clarifying a phrase that contains internal commas.

* Taken from THE REDBOOK. A MANUAL ON LEGAL STYLE. Bryan A. Garner. 3rd reprint 2004.
Example: The prediction must come from “reference to a law of general application”—a state stature or the state constitution—that will deny the defendant’s civil rights. (Emphasis)

Example: Aid to any of the elements of the traditional learning process institution, teachers, or students—is an educational purpose. (Internal commas)

II. Use an em dash—or multiple em dashes—in several conventions to indicate missing information.

a) In a transcript. An em dash may be used instead of ellipsis dots in transcript of dialogue to indicate an interruption or abrupt change of thought.

Example: Q. Did there come a point that you decided you couldn’t take it any longer?
   A. I explained to him that I was and he wouldn’t —like I said, he wouldn’t approve anything.

b) In dates. Use an em dash after the birth ear in a biographical reference to indicate that the person is still alive.

Example: David Foster Wallace (1962—).

c) Expunction. Use two em dashes with no space between them to replace part of a word or name. This devise is most often used to elide all but the first letter of a word or a name, usually either to expunge an obscenity or to preserve a person’s anonymity.

Example: “How do I get this—thing to work?”
Example: Mr. H—informed the police of the robbery plans.

d) In citations. In legal citations, use two em dashes with no space between them to indicate reporter volume and page numbers that have not yet been determined. An underline may also be used for this purpose.


e) Same author: Use three em dashes with no spaces between them to indicate the repetition of an author’s name in an alphabetical bibliography.
The Costly Comma

It could be the most costly piece of punctuation in Canada.

A grammatical blunder may force Rogers Communications Inc. to pay an extra $2.13-million to use utility poles in the Maritimes after the placement of a comma in a contract permitted the deal's cancellation.

The controversial comma sent lawyers and telecommunications regulators scrambling for their English textbooks in a bitter 18-month dispute that serves as an expensive reminder of the importance of punctuation.

Rogers thought it had a five-year deal with Aliant Inc. to string Rogers' cable lines across thousands of utility poles in the Maritimes for an annual fee of $9.60 per pole. But early last year, Rogers was informed that the contract was being cancelled and the rates were going up. Impossible, Rogers thought, since its contract was iron-clad until the spring of 2007 and could potentially be renewed for another five years.

Armed with the rules of grammar and punctuation, Aliant disagreed. The construction of a single sentence in the 14-page contract allowed the entire deal to be scrapped with only one-year's notice, the company argued.

Language buffs take note * Page 7 of the contract states: The agreement “shall continue in force for a period of five years from the date it is made, and thereafter for successive five year terms, unless and until terminated by one year prior notice in writing by either party.”
Rogers' intent in 2002 was to lock into a long-term deal of at least five years. But when regulators with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) parsed the wording, they reached another conclusion.

The validity of the contract and the millions of dollars at stake all came down to one point — the second comma in the sentence.

Had it not been there, the right to cancel wouldn't have applied to the first five years of the contract and Rogers would be protected from the higher rates it now faces.

“Based on the rules of punctuation,” the comma in question “allows for the termination of the [contract] at any time, without cause, upon one-year's written notice,” the regulator said.

Rogers was dumbfounded. The company said it never would have signed a contract to use roughly 91,000 utility poles that could be cancelled on such short notice. Its lawyers tried in vain to argue the intent of the deal trumped the significance of a comma. “This is clearly not what the parties intended,” Rogers said in a letter to the CRTC.

But the CRTC disagreed. And the consequences are significant.

The contract would have shielded Rogers from rate increases that will see its costs jump as high as $28.05 per pole. Instead, the company will likely end up paying about $2.13-million more than expected, based on rough calculations.

Despite the victory, Aliant won't reap the bulk of the proceeds. The poles are mostly owned by Fredericton-based utility NB Power, which contracted out the administration of the business to Aliant at the time the contract was signed.

Neither Rogers nor Aliant could be reached for comment on the ruling. In one of several letters to the CRTC, Aliant called the matter "a basic rule of punctuation," taking a swipe at Rogers' assertion that the comma could be ignored.

“This is a classic case of where the placement of a comma has great importance,” Aliant said.
My impression from the article was that Rogers did not want the contract to be terminated at all during the first term. The following should accomplish that:

This Agreement shall continue in force for a period of five years from the date it is made, and thereafter for successive five-year terms. During successive terms, either party may terminate the Agreement after notifying the other party in writing at least one year prior to the date of termination.