

WRITING WITH CONFIDENCE

The Big 5 Punctuation Marks

*Based on material from *How to Write with Flair*, by Heather Holleman, 2011

A world bereft of punctuations

- The idea is a combination of grapefruit I like pink oranges navels though common are terrific and tangerines or clementines any citrus fruit that's more sweet than sour Peel the fruit the easiest way is to cut off both ends at the poles so you have a flat surface to stand it upright then cut as close to the pulp as possible slicing off the skin in strips and removing as much bitter pith as possible Slice the fruit into disks, then arrange it to show off the various colors and sizes Sprinkle with salt important and chopped or very thinly sliced red onion or shallot The dressing is a mixture of sharp and sweet designed to bring out the same contrasting flavors in the fruit olive oil sherry vinegar a few drops of honey and a bit more citrus I like a squeeze of lime but lemon is also fine a pinch of cayenne or a sprinkling of black pepper is all right but not essential

Ahh, that's better

- The idea is a combination of grapefruit (**I like pink**), oranges (**navels though common are terrific**) and tangerines or **clementines: any** citrus fruit that's more sweet than sour. Peel the **fruit: the** easiest way is to cut off both ends at the poles so you have a flat surface to stand it **upright, then** cut as close to the pulp as possible slicing off the skin in strips, and removing as much bitter pith as possible. Slice the fruit into **disks, then** arrange it to show off the various colors and sizes. Sprinkle with salt--**very important**--and chopped or very thinly sliced red onion or shallot. The dressing is a mixture of sharp and **sweet, designed** to bring out the same contrasting flavors in **the fruit: olive** oil, sherry vinegar, a few drops of honey and a bit more citrus. I like a squeeze of lime, but lemon is **also fine; a pinch** of cayenne or a sprinkling of black pepper is all right but not essential.

-from Mark Bittman, *New York Times*, 2010

Why use the Big 5?

- Duh, because you have to (well, at least the comma)
- Complexity
- Cleverness
- Credibility
- They're cool!

Semicolon

A period completes an idea and moves onto the next. A semi-colon lets one thought linger and blend into the other. -

-How to Write with Flair

- Analogies
 - Toothpick
 - Romance

- “Writing this essay invigorates me; now that I have the big 5, I astonish my readers.”
 - The second sentence explains more what you mean by the first

- “I hope to dominate these papers; I plan to use every bit of flair available.”
 - Sentence two explains what you will do to accomplish sentence one

Now, you try...

- Should the sentences have a period or semicolon?
 - ▣ I plan on working for a restaurant. My degree enables me to be a chef or a manager.
 - ▣ My resume sounds completely bland. I want my written voice to sound unique.
 - ▣ The semicolon creates credibility. Not many writers know how to use one properly.

Dashes and Parentheses

- Dashes are like
 - ▣ Cayenne pepper
 - ▣ A shout (in a good way)

- Parentheses are like
 - ▣ Cornstarch
 - ▣ A whisper

Now, you try...

- Should the *italicized* phrase be a shout or a whisper?
 - ▣ I could eat an entire cheesecake *although I won't* right now.
 - ▣ The last time I cooked anything *other than macaroni and cheese* I almost burned down the house.
 - ▣ I used the verb “chronicled” yesterday since I’ve exhausted my other new verb choices *grappled, highlighted, expunged*.

Colon

- Colons are like
 - ▣ Waiters at a restaurant
 - ▣ Tour guides
 - ▣ Teachers
- How does Bittman employ the colon?
 - ▣ Peel the fruit: the easiest way is to cut off both ends at the poles.
- Colons also introduce lists
 - ▣ Eggs can be cooked three ways: scrambled, fried, or boiled.
- Try to write a few sentences using a colon...

Commas

- Commas are like
 - Salt
 - A key
- Adding phrases to a base sentence:
 - After I tailgated, I went to the party.
 - I went to the party after I tailgated.
 - I went, after I tailgated, to the party.

Special subordinating conjunctions

- After
- Although
- As
- As soon as
- Because
- Before
- By the time
- Even if
- Even though
- Every time
- If
- In case
- Now that
- Once
- Only if
- Since
- Though
- Unless
- Until
- When
- Whenever
- Whereas
- Whether or not
- While

Other conjunctions

- And, but, for, or, nor, so, yet
 - ▣ If what follows the conjunction is a complete sentence, you need a comma

 - ▣ I didn't go to the party, but I wanted to.
 - ▣ I didn't go to the party but wanted to.

- There are many more rules about commas, but these are the basics.

Commas

□ How does Bittman use commas?

- The idea is a combination of grapefruit (I like pink), oranges (navels though common are terrific) and tangerines or clementines: any citrus fruit that's more sweet than sour. Peel the fruit: the easiest way is to cut off both ends at the poles so you have a flat surface to stand it upright, then cut as close to the pulp as possible slicing off the skin in strips, and removing as much bitter pith as possible. Slice the fruit into disks, then arrange it to show off the various colors and sizes. Sprinkle with salt--very important--and chopped or very thinly sliced red onion or shallot. The dressing is a mixture of sharp and sweet, designed to bring out the same contrasting flavors in the fruit: olive oil, sherry vinegar, a few drops of honey and a bit more citrus. I like a squeeze of lime, but lemon is also fine; a pinch of cayenne or a sprinkling of black pepper is all right but not essential.

Go write with confidence!

- Semicolon = a romance
- Colon = a teacher
- Dashes = shout
- Parentheses = a whisper
- Comma = a key