

Don't be a Christmas tree!

 By Sarah Heuer

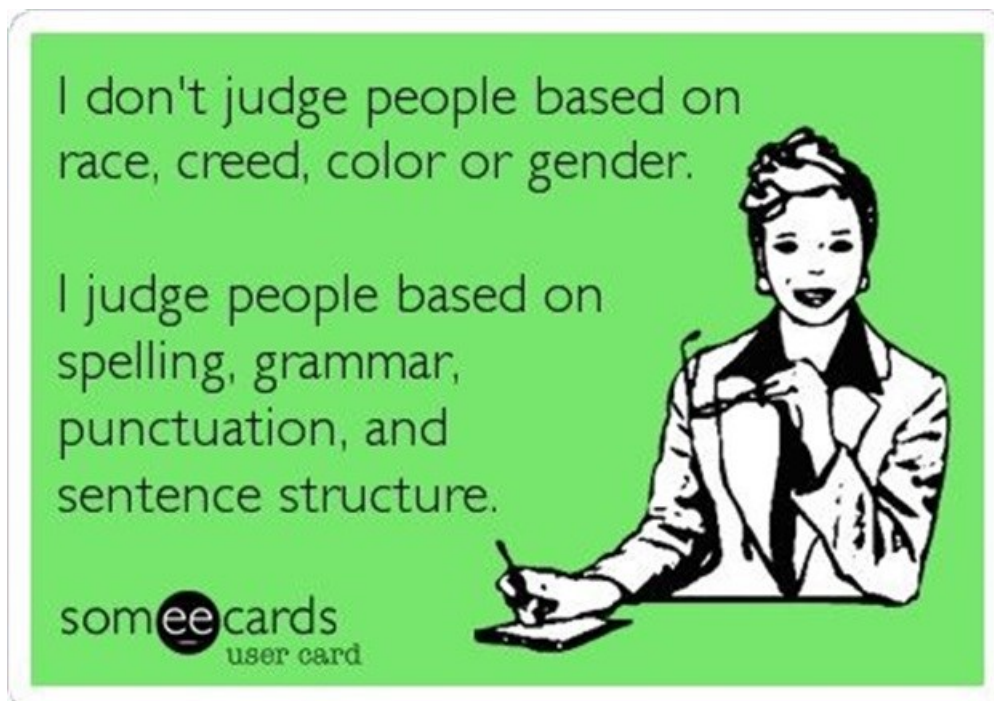
28 Apr 2016

Dear PUNKtuator.

*If you, use Punctuation as -- a decorative optional extra:-
People will think; your Brain is a random-tacky bauble too...?*

I love punctuation. I want to tattoo a few marks on my skin – that's real love, usually reserved for the sweethearts and mums of sailors and bikers. And I think there are a lot of very good reasons for you to love it and embrace it in all your copy as well...

Reason the first: Not confusing your audience



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Imagine you're devising a campaign to promote feminism and equal rights. Here is your slogan, as provided by your superior:

A woman without her man is nothing.

Now, you need to punctuate it to make it work.

...Have you figured it out?

A woman: without her, man is nothing.

Punctuation makes a difference. I rest my case.

But if you want more evidence, delivered in an entertaining format, you can read *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss. It's the book that inspired my retirement plans for vandalising ungrammatical signage.

Because I'm pretty bad at cards and bowls, so what the hell – we all need a hobby, right?

Reason the second: Earning the respect of your audience



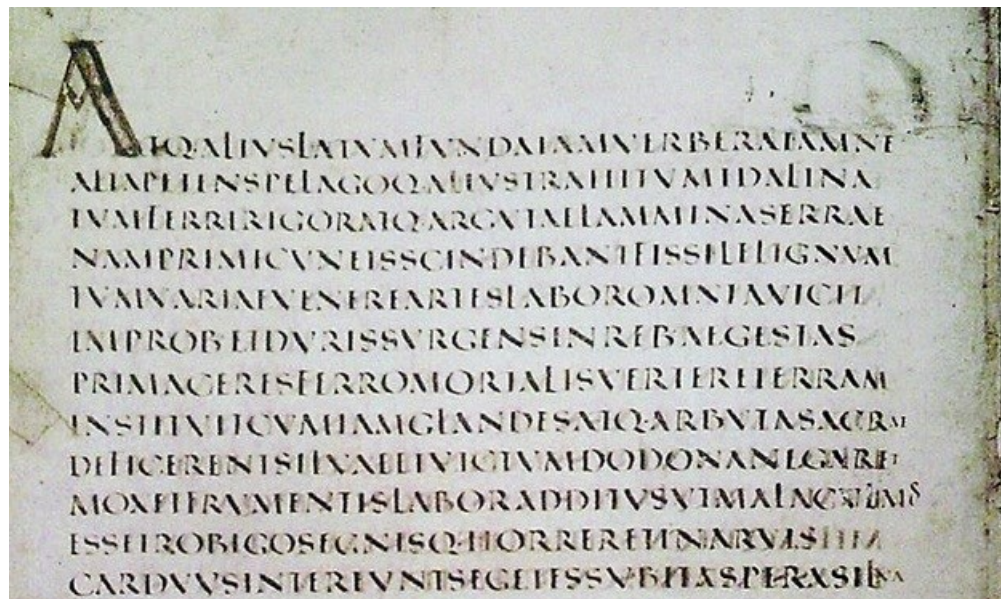
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Attention to detail is a quality you want to convey. If you're sloppy in one thing, chances are you're also sloppy in others –

don't chance this assumption by your audience and their reaction to your marketing.

Because we are all prone to judge others according to their flaws, and to feel superior as a result.

Reason the third: Making it easy for your audience



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IMAGINE IF EVERY SINGLE THING YOU EVER
READ WAS WRITTEN LIKE THIS
HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU THINK IT WOULD
TAKE FOR YOU TO COMPREHEND ANYTHING
LET ALONE READ IT ALOUD TO OTHERS IN PUBLIC
BECAUSE THAT SHOWS THINGS WERE IN THE
REALLY BAD REALLY OLD DAYS

(I cheated – I used line breaks to help you to decipher the above.) In ancient Rome, there were neither spaces nor punctuation marks between words and sentences. As if scrolls weren't unwieldy enough!

Don't make your target market work for you. Rather work really hard for them, making your copy as easy as possible for them to assimilate and respond to.

Now, for the really enthused (or bored) reader, have a look at the little case study below. If you can fix it before the end of the month, and send the corrected version via Twitter to @Sarah_Heuer, I'll give you one free hour of editing or copywriting.

It contains the following common and basic errors:

1. Unnecessary shouting!
2. Statement/question confusion?
3. Sentences spliced with commas, and commabuse (my own term)
4. Apostrophobia/philia (more of my own terminology's)
5. Too Many caps/inconsistent caps
6. General Inconsistency.
7. Inappropriate "quotation" marks

Hi my name is Kevin, im a punctuation over-user!!! When I write to Friend's and Family... pretty much "every" sentence ends with an exclamation mark. I indiscriminately use ellipsis for dramatic effect... when ranting to clients or colleagues? Inverted commas are thrown heedlessly around words, that require:

- some ominous music behind them,
- Or even worse, when writing in my second language and I don't know the word.
- And when I couldn't be 'arsed' to use Spell-check... !!!?

ABOUT SARAH HEUER

Has been in the language and communication business for 15 years. She holds Cum Laude Honours degrees in English Literature and Publishing. She has lectured Journalism, taught English, and written and edited in a variety of sectors, including law, the culinary world, secondary and tertiary education, psychology, the arts, finance and economics, and marketing. In her spare time, she toys with the idea of writing a best-seller. She is currently head editor and copywriter at inSite Innovative Education Solutions.

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