

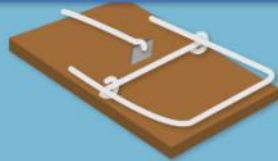
# PUNCTUATION PITFALLS QUICK REFERENCE



## The Accidental Apostrophe

Remember that plurals don't need apostrophes, but possessives do.

- X** *Today, the farmers horse's were moved to the far pasture.*
- ✓** *Today, the farmer's horses were moved to the far pasture.*



## The Camouflaged Comma

Forgetting a comma often leads to run-on sentences. Be sure to include commas in lists, between clauses, and after introductory adverbs.

- X** *Strangely he took a list to the store but still forgot to get apples rice and soda.*
- ✓** *Strangely, he took a list to the store, but he still forgot to get apples, rice, and soda.*

## The Lamentable Line

When deciding whether to use a hyphen (-) or a dash (--), remember that hyphens join two or more words into one word, while dashes usually separate words or phrases from one another.

- X** *I swatted although I usually hate to kill insects that good - - for - - nothing mosquito.*
- ✓** *I swatted - - although I usually hate to kill insects - - that good-for-nothing mosquito.*

## The Inconsistent Its

Because we use the word so commonly, it's important to distinguish between the possessive form of its and the contraction for it is.

- X** *The fur on the back of it's neck is raised, so I think its afraid of us.*
- ✓** *The fur on the back of its neck is raised, so I think it's afraid of us.*



## The Semicolon Slipup

Beware of using a semicolon where a colon is more appropriate, such as when announcing a list.

- X** *She is known for three things; her strength, her courage, and her perseverance.*
- ✓** *She is known for three things: her strength, her courage, and her perseverance.*



## The Questionable Quotation Mark

The closing quotation mark always goes after the ending punctuation of a sentence, not before it.

- X** *"Will it matter," asked Quentin, "whether I use bleach in this load of laundry?"*
- ✓** *"Will it matter," asked Quentin, "whether I use bleach in this load of laundry?"*

## The Careless Comma

When two parts of a compound sentence are joined without a coordinating conjunction, you don't use a comma to set them apart. You use a semicolon.

- X** *I wasn't feeling well this morning, I called my doctor for advice.*
- ✓** *I wasn't feeling well this morning; I called my doctor for advice.*

