**Punctuation – Commas, Semicolons, Quotation Marks, and Dashes**

**COMMAS**
The basic rule of thumb for commas use is where there is a natural pause, use a comma. However, there are other instances where commas should be used as well.

**Combining independent clauses (word groups that can stand alone as separate sentences):**

*Nearly all the unicorns were one color, but the one with the biggest ears had a glow-in-the-dark mane.*

**Between items in a series (use a comma between ALL items in a series – including the last two):**

*The day after our comeback victory, my quads, hamstrings, calves, and back felt like I had been run over by a train.*

**SEMICOLONs**
Semicolons are used between independent clauses that are not joined with a coordinating conjunction (but, and, or, nor, for, so, yet). Basically, use a semicolon when you are combining two complete sentences. For example…

**Between Independent Clauses:**

*Portland is a rainy city; it rains over twelve million inches per year.*

*I walked noiselessly across the living room being careful not to wake my family; they had been up since six that morning shoveling rain off the trees.*

**COLONS**
Colons are used after an independent clause (complete sentence) to call attention to words that follow it. They are most commonly used with lists, appositives (a noun or a noun phrase that renames another noun right next to it), and quotations.

**Lists:**

*On weekends, I watch the following shows: Parenthood, Grey’s Anatomy, and Modern Family.*

**Appositives:**

*My brother, the third child and youngest of the two brothers, snapped his gum to the beat of Thriller.*

**Quotations:**

*Think about the famous quote from René Descartes: “Cogito ergo sum.”*

**QUOTATION MARKS**
Several rules are involves with the use of quotation marks, especially in regards to punctuation.

**Periods and Commas – place inside quotation marks:**

*“When I grow up,” Tori said, “I want to be a celebrated fashion designer for Nike.”*

**Colons and Semicolons – place outside quotation marks:**

Sarah moaned, “This accounting test is so stupid. I can’t wait for the semester to end”; the end of the term, however, was in three short days.

**Questions Marks and Exclamation Points – place inside quotation marks unless they apply to the sentence as a whole:**

*David exclaimed, “I can’t wait for the Dodgers’ game next week!”*

*Have you heard the song that goes “na na na na come on”?*

**DASH**
Use a dash when special emphasis is needed; for example, to introduce a list, a restatement, an amplification, or a dramatic shift in tone or thought. As a general rule, however, avoid using the dash unless you have a specific reason for doing so. Use colons instead as they accomplish the same goal.

*Our assistant soccer coach got pulled over on our way to Kirkland – she will never live that one down.*

*Annika ate all my Mud Puppies – who does that?!*

*It’s weird that I am the only person in my family who likes learning languages – even my artistic sister doesn’t like it.*