

**NB:** If you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is (hopefully) because you have expressed a wish to do so. If this is not the case, and/or you do not wish to receive it in future – *please let us know!*

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Dear friends

As most of you will know, the little “seminar” [*Do you speak “danglish”?*] planned for 26 May had to be postponed owing to illness. The plan now is to hold it in September. So if you would like to come and you already know now that you cannot be there on some particular date(s) in weeks 35-39, please let me know as soon as possible. Final date next issue.

## Punctuation

Punctuation in English is used to show how the written word should be spoken. It is not there to show the *grammar* structure of the sentence, but its *meaning* – as expressed in slight pauses and shifts in tone when the words are read aloud. These slight pauses, please note, are not primarily to allow the speaker to breathe. Speakers tend to breathe whenever they need to, irrespective of the presence or absence of commas in a sentence. ☺

Publishing houses often have very complete sets of rules for English punctuation, but for most purposes a few simple ideas suffice. And the first rule is: *forget the rules you learned in school for your own language*. They do not apply in English.

**Commas.** We use commas to indicate short meaningful pauses or shifts in tone. The latter might apply to a word, phrase or clause which is *parenthetical* in nature, i.e. inserted to give *extra information*. Short meaningful pauses usually occur as a result of the *phrasing* of a sentence, or in *lists* of items.

So listen to the way you would *say* the sentence (in a natural way) so you can *hear* where the commas should come. If there is a short pause or shift in tone, you probably need a comma. But there is no comma in English if there is no pause or shift in tone. If in doubt, leave it out – *but try not to be in doubt all the time!* ☺

For example: never put commas round *identifying* relative clauses (e.g. *People who live in glass houses should not throw stones*), but

always put commas round relative clauses that are *parenthetical* (e.g. *My friend Mary, who lives in a glass house, might be ill-advised to start throwing stones around*).

**Semicolons and colons.** Where a meaningful pause within a sentence is of longer duration, you may need a semi-colon or even a colon. One typical use is where two main clauses are used in the same sentence without a connecting word (like *and*, *or*, *because*, etc.).

**Full stops.** Sentences end with a full stop (or a question mark or an exclamation mark). Because the pause at the end of a sentence is longer, it is often considered good practice to use *two spaces* after a full stop. Please note: this is not done where a full stop is used to mark an abbreviation (like *e.g.*, *approx.*, and *etc.*) in the middle of a sentence. Here only one space is used before the next word.

Note: If you want two spaces after full stops on your *web* pages, you will need to add the HTML code `&nbsp;`; (followed by a space) immediately after each full stop.

# From the workshop...

## Translating numbers and money

Most countries on the continent of Europe use a full stop to separate the thousands and a comma to show where the decimals begin. But Britain, North America, and most of the rest of the world use a decimal point, with commas being used to separate the thousands. *When translating text that contains numbers, it is important to remember to 'translate' this convention, too.*

With regard to the commas, this convention follows the punctuation rules mentioned above: 7,654,321 = “seven million, six hundred and fifty-four thousand, three hundred and twenty-one”. The phrasing and pauses are very clear when the number is read aloud. Note that when stating a number, the plural forms of the words *hundred*, *thousand* or *million* are not used, e.g. *The Sun is millions of miles away. How far? It's about 93 million miles away.*

In the case of money, the decimal point is *written*, but never *said*: £1.35 = “one pound thirty-five”.

## A question from a reader

I always struggle with the Danish phrases “i videst muligt omfang” and “i stigende grad”. They always sound non-native when I translate into British English. Will you look at it? – AV

I would have thought that “as much (or far) as possible” and “more and more” (or “increasingly”) would probably cover at least a great many cases – LW

## On being timely ...

Quite a lot of web sites promise their customers “timely” delivery of the services on offer. Now “timely” certainly does have to do with time, but not in the precise sense usually meant. The word “timely” is used of events that occur opportunely: *The inheritance from Aunt Agatha was timely; I had just been made redundant.* But what most companies wish to express is not some happy coincidence like this, but that their deliveries are “punctual” or that they deliver “on time”.

**English support invites you to a seminar...**

### ***Do you speak “danglish”?***

This seminar (postponed from 26<sup>th</sup> May) will now be held in September. The date will be fixed before the end of this month. So if you want to come, but already know now that you cannot be there on some particular date(s) in weeks 35-39, please let me know before 30<sup>th</sup> June.

The actual date and time will be announced in the next issue of *News & Tips* (due 3<sup>rd</sup> July).

## Physician, heal thyself!

BA points out that the April issue contained a nice bit of “danglish” by none other than yours truly. I wrote ‘good English should not **fill** very much more than Danish’, which should have been ‘good English should not **take up** very much more **space** than Danish’. *Sorry about that!* It really is a *very* contagious infection is my only excuse ...

Best wishes

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