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**July/August 2007**

### INTRODUCTION

Hello! I hope the summer is treating you well, and that you're experiencing a nice balance of work and play. I have to admit, running a home-based operation is a pretty sweet deal on days like today. As I type the text for this newsletter, I'm sitting on my patio enjoying a warm breeze, laptop propped on the picnic table, iced tea by my side, gazing at my thriving vegetable garden for inspiration. But although it may seem so, I'm not completely in la-la land. I'm trying to think of some useful bit of information to offer my faithful readers. As always, if you have suggestions for topics you'd like to see addressed here please let me know! For now, however, I've got something in mind based on a recent editing job I handled for one of my newsletter clients. I hope the following tips are helpful to you, and if you know of anyone else who might benefit from them, feel free to pass this article along!

Have a great rest of the summer, and we'll chat again as fall approaches.

Best,  
Cassie Hart

## Feature Article

### **Q & A: common writing questions**

Since I've been involved in the communications business I have had opportunities to work as both a writer and editor. I've often had the good fortune to edit excellent writers who needed only a few suggestions about how to make their prose more convincing or accurate, or who needed only an occasional minor spelling or punctuation correction (understood as merely a typo, of course 😊).

I have also tackled the task of working on manuscripts that need a little TLC. From these experiences I have come to

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recognize certain types of errors that tend to occur time and time again. I'm not sure if some writers are misinformed about the proper way to use certain descriptions/markings or if they are simply unaware of what is considered "correct." Thought I'd share a few examples with you, as you'll see below.

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***Please tell me how to handle punctuation marks and quotation marks...I'm never sure if commas and periods should be placed inside or outside of the quotes.***

Ok, let's take a stab at this. Which do you think is correct?

I hope to read "Moby Dick", "Catcher in the Rye", and "To Kill a Mockingbird" this summer.

I hope to read "Moby Dick," "Catcher in the Rye," and "To Kill a Mockingbird" this summer.

While I personally prefer to see punctuation marks—periods, commas, semicolons, etc.—inside the quotation marks as per the second example, technically either way is acceptable. (The authoritative [Chicago Manual of Style](#) advocates this method also.) This "rule" is not always followed, however, as I see plenty of writers place punctuation outside of the quotation marks.

The answer? Really, it makes little difference as long as your point is clear. Just make sure you are consistent with whichever method you decide to use, and be sure to consult your company's style guide to see how instances such as these should be treated.

***My English professor marked up my latest paper because I didn't treat lists within a sentence properly. Help me?***

I assume you're talking about linear lists, like when a series of items is mentioned in a single sentence within a paragraph (as opposed to a bulleted list). This is actually a common issue, and I've seen a lot of linear lists written incorrectly. Here's an example of what to do/not to do:

***Incorrect***

My favorite songs are, "How Deep is Your Love," "Thriller," and "We Built This City."

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## **Correct**

My favorite songs are “How Deep is Your Love,” “Thriller,” and “We Built This City.”

You don’t need to use any sort of punctuation before listing items, unless you are specifically introducing a list of items as follows:

These are my three favorite songs: “How Deep is Your Love,” “Thriller,” and “We Built This City.”

### ***Is it really wrong to put two spaces after a period at the end of a sentence?***

No, it’s not really wrong. This isn’t so much inaccurate as it is a change of the times. Typewritten text needed to add these extra spaces to help add white space between sentences for ease of reading (due to letters that took up uneven amounts of space, or monospaced fonts). The norm today, however, with digital fonts, is to use a single space. This is because most fonts are proportionally spaced, allowing overall ease of reading from a visual point.

These are just a few examples of unclear or confusing elements of writing. Have more questions about how to treat certain types of text? [Send me a note](#) and you’ll get an answer, either via email or in a future issue of *WriteTips*.

## **FEEDBACK CENTRAL**

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Have suggestions or comments about how to make this ezine even better? I’d love to hear from you! Are the articles useful? Have any of these tips helped with your own writing? Send me an [email](#) and let me know how I’m doing!

## **ABOUT CASSIE HART**

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Over nine years of professional writing experience has afforded me the opportunity to learn the finer points of writing efficient, effective, and creative copy. Press releases, brochures, newsletters, website content, and articles are among the many types of marketing and promotional communications I regularly generate for clients. To discuss potential projects not listed here (or to obtain more information about any project types listed above) please [contact me](#). All initial consultations and estimates for projects are FREE!

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