

Punctuation is becoming increasingly decorative and less functional

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Raymond Chen

The “Blog” of “Unnecessary” Quotation Marks calls out abuse of the quotation mark. For some reason, quotation marks are being increasingly used as a form of emphasis (a usage which remains controversial), by people unaware that such use, when interpreted as *scare quotes*, serves to undermine their original point. Mind you, the emphasis theory doesn’t explain all misuses of quotation marks I’ve seen. I’m led to believe that some people simply enjoy seeing quotation marks and place them around randomly-selected words. Apostrophes are another commonly-misused punctuation mark. So much so that the city of Birmingham has simply given up and deleted them from all their street signs. Other cities followed suit. Tying together all this is a sign I saw in an airport dining facility:

SORRY NO FREE
REFILL’S
AFTER LEAVING
FACILITY”

The challenge isn’t so much finding what’s wrong with the sign as it is finding what’s still right. (As a bonus, the sign was next to another sign that read “No free refills”, which only served to create more confusion, because the first sign suggests that refills are free if you stay inside the facility, but the second sign denies it.)

Today is National Punctuation Day.

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