Quick Fixes for Punctuation (in Email and Elsewhere)

**COMMAS**

1. **Use a comma after a greeting**
   When beginning an email or letter, put a comma between your *salutation* (your greeting word, such as "Hello") and the person's name:

   **INCORRECT:**
   
   Hi Samantha
   Good morning everyone

   **CORRECT:**
   
   Hi, Samantha
   Good morning, everyone

2. **Don’t put a comma between subject and verb**
   Don’t separate the subject of a sentence (who or what is doing something) from the main action of a sentence, no matter how long the subject might seem to be:

   **INCORRECT:** The second congressional hearing to look into the matter during this legislative term, found that ethics violations had occurred.

3. **Use commas throughout a list**
   It never hurts to put a comma before the “and” or “or” in a list of three or more:

   The scholarships went to Jason, Ellie, and Kate.

   Doing so can even help avoid confusion:

   The money must be split evenly by my parents, Betty and Larry.
   The money must be split evenly by my parents, Betty, and Larry.

**COLONS**

4. **Use colons before lists...**:

   Each applicant should bring the following: passport, references, and a check.

   ...but don’t use one if there’s a verb right before the list:

   Each applicant should bring a passport, references, and a check.

   ...and leave out words such as with, for, by, etc., if you want to use a colon:

   Each applicant must come with a passport, references, and a check.

**APOSTROPHES**

5. **Use an apostrophe to make possessives:**

   One boy’s uniform    Two boys’ uniforms
   One bus’s tires      Two buses’ tires
   Lisa’s laundry       Sophocles’ laundry OR Sophocles’s laundry
   Chris’s laundry      Bates’s endowment

6. **Almost never use apostrophes to make plurals:**

   apples   NOT   apple’s   The Smiths   NOT   The Smith’s
   Ladies   NOT   Lady’s   The Joneses   NOT   The Jones’s

Writing at BATES