

## 撇号的式微 The decline of the apostrophe

Hello. This is 6 Minute English, I'm Georgina.

大家好，这里是六分钟英语，我是乔治娜。

And I'm Rob.

我是罗伯。

Are you a punctuation pedant?

你是个标点学究吗？

Do you get upset, annoyed or angry if you see punctuation being used incorrectly- particularly apostrophes?

如果你看到标点符号——尤其是撇号被错误地使用，你会感到郁闷或生气吗？

Well, it depends.

嗯，看情况吧。

Usually I'm pretty chilled out about it, but sometimes, just sometimes, it really winds me up.

通常我对这个很淡定，但是有时候，真的是有时候它会让我火冒三丈。

For example, if I see a sign for taxis at a train station and it says taxi-apostrophe-s-aargh!

比如，如果我看到火车站的出租车标识，并且它上面写的是出租车撇号s——我的天！

Why, why?

什么鬼，什么鬼？

The apostrophe is not used to show there is more than one, it's used to show there is a missing letter or that the word is a possessive-it's just wrong!

撇号不是用来标识不止一辆车的，它是用来表示有一个字母被省略，或那个单词是所有格——这样是错的！

So that does kind of make my blood boil.

所以那种情况确实会让我血液沸腾。

So, when you say you're pretty chilled about it, you mean...

所以你说你对它很淡定，你指的是.....

OK, OK, I'm not chilled at all.

好吧，其实我一点都不淡定。

But maybe I wish I was.

但是我希望我能淡定一点。

Well, we're going to be taking a look at reactions to the use and abuse of apostrophes in this programme.

好的，本期节目中我们要了解一下人们对撇号的用法以及滥用的反应。

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But first, a question.

但是首先是一个问题。

The word 'apostrophe' itself—which language does it come from?

“撇号”这个词本身——它来自哪种语言？

Is it: A. Latin, B. Greek, or C. Arabic?

是 A. 拉丁语, B. 希腊语, 还是 C. 阿拉伯语?

What do you think, Rob?

你怎么看, 罗伯?

Well, I don't think it's Arabic, so it's a toss-up between Latin and Greek.

我认为不是阿拉伯语, 所以应该要在拉丁语和希腊语中选。

I'm going to say Greek.

我要选希腊语。

OK. We'll see if you're correct at the end of the programme.

好的, 我们会在节目结束的时候看你是否回答正确。

The apostrophe, it is true to say, is often misused.

撇号, 说实话经常被用错。

It's put where it shouldn't be and not used where it should be.

不该用它的时候它被用, 而该用它的时候有没有被使用。

Is it important, though?

不过这重要吗?

Does it matter?

要紧吗?

After all, in spoken English there is no difference between 'it's' with an apostrophe and 'its' without.

毕竟在口语中带撇号的“it's”和不带撇号的“its”没有区别啊。

'Your' and 'you're' -short for 'you are' sound the same.

“Your”和“you're”——“you are”的缩略形式的发音是一样。

So what's the problem in written English?

所以书面语中有什么问题呢?

In many cases, there isn't a problem at all.

在很多情况下, 它完全不是问题。

There would be very little confusion.

它只会引起很小的困惑。

But I don't think that means we should just ignore the correct way to use them.

但是我不认为这就意味着我们应该忽视它们的正确用法。

Sometimes it can be very important to make clear if it's a singular or plural or possessive.

有时候搞清楚它是单数还是复数或者是所有格是很重要的。

Another important thing to remember is that in CVs and job applications a good standard of spelling and punctuation is expected.

另一件很重要的事是在简历和职位申请表中高质量的拼写和标点是应该具备的。

Get it wrong and you could miss out on a good opportunity.

如果把它弄错了，你可能会失去一个重要的机会。

There is one group that has tried for nearly 20 years to keep others to these high standards-The Apostrophe Protection Society.

有一个组织20年来一直努力了让其他人遵守这些高标准——撇号保护协会。

They have publicly pointed out incorrect use in public signs and communications-a tactic that has not always been welcomed or successful.

他们公开指出公共标识和通讯中的错误使用——一直不受欢迎或不成功的策略。

But like the apostrophe itself, the group is in danger.

但是就像撇号自身，这个组织身处险境。

Here's a BBC news report on the subject.

以下是BBC新闻针对这个话题的报道。

They linger above our letters, they wander around the endings of our words, but apostrophes, it seems, are an endangered species.

他们盘桓于我们的信件，漫游于我们单词的词尾，但是撇号，似乎是一个濒危物种。

The Apostrophe Protection Society-yes, there really is one-says their future is, well, up in the air.

撇号保护协会——是的，真的有这样一个组织——说他们的未来，嗯，悬而未决。

How does he describe apostrophes?

他如何描述撇号？

Using metaphorical, poetic language, he says they linger above our letters.

使用了隐喻的诗化语言，他说他们盘桓于我们的信件。

To linger is a verb usually used to describe someone or something staying somewhere before finally leaving.

盘桓这个动词被用来描述某人或某物在最终离开之前一直停留在某地。

So, we have apostrophes lingering above our letters and also he said they wander around the end of the words.

所以我们的信件里一直有撇号，并且他说它们漫步于词尾。

Yes, also a metaphorical use.

是的，有一处隐喻的用法。

To wander means to walk slowly around without any real purpose or urgency.

漫步指的是漫无目的，不紧不慢地慢慢走。

And he went on to say that the future of the apostrophe is up in the air.

然后他继续说道撇号的未来悬而未决。

When something is up in the air, it means its future is not certain, it's not guaranteed.

如果某事是悬而未决的，这意味着他的未来不明确，没有保障。

So if, for example, your holiday plans are up in the air, it means that there is some kind of problem and you might not be going on holiday after all.

所以打个比方，如果你的假期计划悬而未决，这指的是有一些问题，而你可能根本不会去度假。

The person who founded The Apostrophe Protection Society is John Edwards.

撇号保护协会的创始人是约翰·爱德华。

Now 96 years old, he has decided to give it up.

现年96岁的他已经决定放弃了。

Partly because of his age, but also because he thinks that due to the impact of texting and social media, he has lost the battle against bad punctuation.

部分是因为他的年龄，同样也是因为他认为由于短信和社交媒体的影响，他已经输掉了跟糟糕的标点之间的战斗。

So why has it come to this?

所以是怎么走到今天这一步的呢？

Here he is explaining why he thinks people aren't bothered about using correct punctuation.

以下是他在解释他认为人们不愿意费神使用正确的标点的原因。

I think it's a mixture of ignorance and laziness.

我认为这是无知和懒惰的综合体。

They're too ignorant to know where it goes, they're too lazy to learn so they just don't bother.

他们过于无知，以至于不知道应该怎么用，他们过于懒惰以至于他们根本就不想费神去学。

The barbarians have won.

野蛮人赢了。

So what's his reason?

那么他给出了什么原因？

He blames ignorance and laziness.

他责怪无知和懒惰。

Ignorance is a lack of knowledge or understanding of something.

无知指的是缺乏对于某物的知识或理解。

So people don't know the rules and are too lazy to learn them, according to Edwards.

所以根据爱德华的说法，人们不知道使用规则，并且懒于学习。

Quite strong views there!

非常有力的观点。

Yes, and you thought I was a pedant!

是的，而且你刚刚认为我是一个学究！

He actually goes further to say that the barbarians have won.

事实上他进一步说道野蛮人赢了。

Barbarian is a historical word for people who weren't part of so-called civilized society.

野蛮人是一个历史名词，指的是那些不属于文明社会的人。

They were seen as violent and aggressive, primitive and uncivilized.

他们被认为是野蛮且具有攻击性的，原始且未开化的。

So it's not a compliment then?

所以这并不是好话咯？

Oh, no!

哦，不是！

Right, before we review today's vocabulary, let's have the answer to today's quiz.

好的，在我们回顾今天的词汇之前，我们来揭晓今天问题的答案吧。

Which language does the word apostrophe come from?

撇号这个单词源于哪种语言？

What did you say?

你说的是？

I went for Greek.

我选的是希腊语。

Congratulations to you and anyone else who got that right.

恭喜你，还有答对的其他人。

Greek is the right answer.

希腊语就是正确答案。

Now let's remind ourselves of today's vocabulary.

现在我们来回顾一下今天的词汇吧。

First, what's a pedant, Rob?

首先，什么是学究，罗伯？

A pedant is someone who corrects other people's small mistakes—particularly in grammar and punctuation—but it's not the same as an English teacher!

学究指的是纠正其他人小错误的人——尤其是语法和标点错误——但是这跟英语老师又不一样。

A pedant will correct native speakers' mistakes too, and not in the classroom.

学究也会纠正母语者的错误，并且不是在课堂上。

To linger means to stay somewhere for longer.

盘桓指的是但在某处很久。

To wander is to walk around without a real purpose or intention to get somewhere quickly.

漫步指的是漫无目的地走，并不急于去往某地。

If your plans are up in the air, it means they are at risk and might not happen.

如果你的计划悬而未决，这意味着他们处于危险之中并且可能不会发生。

Ignorance is the state of not knowing something that should be known.

无知指的是不知晓应该知晓的东西的状态。

And finally, a barbarian is a word for a primitive and uncivilized person.

最后，野蛮人指的是原始的，未开化的人。

Right, we can't linger in this studio as our six minutes are up.

好的，我们不能再盘桓于这个演播室中了，因为六分钟已经到了。

You can find more from us about punctuation and many other aspects of English online, on social media and on the BBC Learning English app.

你们可以在网上、社交媒体和BBC学习英语的App上找到更多关于标点和其它英语方面的知识。

Bye for now.

再见。

Bye bye!

再见！

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