

What vampires can teach us about colons

Written by 'Grammar Guy' By Curtis Honeycutt Guest Columnist
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Colons are one of the most misunderstood punctuation marks. Many people think they are only used to introduce lists, but they can be used for much more. For example, colons can introduce quotations, explanations and even jokes.

By the way, this column has nothing to do with the colon body part, although we will discuss human anatomy in any sentence now. I wouldn't want a colon to be the butt of any joke.

What better way to learn about colons than from vampires? After all, vampires are known for leaving two marks on their victims' necks that resemble colons.

So, here are a few things that vampires can teach us about colons:

The colon is a versatile punctuation mark that can introduce a shocking or unexpected statement, such as a vampire saying, "I'm a vampire: I drink blood." This use of the colon is similar to how it is used in jokes, where the second sentence is often a punchline that contradicts or subverts the first sentence.

What's the difference between a vampire and a colon? One sucks blood, and the other sucks punctuation.

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Colons can be used to introduce a list of items. This use of the colon is similar to that used in grocery lists, where the second part of the sentence lists the items that need to be purchased.

For example, a writer might use a colon to introduce a list of reasons why they believe the movie *Renfield* is the best vampire movie ever made, such as: Nicolas Cage's hair, Nicolas Cage's acting and the fact that Nic Cage actually shaved his teeth to transform into Dracula for the role. Cage undertook this dental procedure so his prosthetic fangs fit in his mouth but didn't impede his speech.

Don't forget about the humble colon the next time you write something. It is a versatile punctuation mark that can make your writing more precise, concise, and bloody funny overall.

And if you ever encounter a vampire, be sure to thank them for teaching you about colons. After all, it's not every day that you get to learn about a punctuation mark that can be a real pain in the neck. Just take care not to get bitten by a vampire, unless you want to end up another comma-tose bloodsucker.

—Curtis Honeycutt is an award-winning syndicated humor columnist. Connect with him on Twitter (@curtishoneycutt) or at curtishoneycutt.com.

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