



Gilda Radner, as her news-woman character Roseanne Rosanadana, used to end her wandering rants with, “It’s always something . . .” It is, Gilda. It is.

I try to stay up with current trends. Change comes pretty fast these days, so it can be hard to keep up. Thanks, however, to that arbiter of all things discussable, Facebook, we can be sure we’re going to know the latest about our friends as well as really important stuff like the Oxford comma and the current debate about one space or two paces after a period in written text. As a writer, the latter two interest me even if there’s no clear cut answer to either.

The Oxford comma (also known as the Harvard comma and the serial comma) is that tiny bit of punctuation used in a series, as in “Lions, tigers, and bears”. Its use was never in question until it was in question per the University of Oxford’s own stylebook, which announced around 2011, “As a general rule, do not use the serial/Oxford comma: so write ‘a, b and c’ not ‘a, b, and c’. But when a comma would assist in the meaning of a sentence or helps to resolve ambiguity, it can be used – especially where one of the items in the list is already joined by ‘and’.”

Let the debate begin.

The best and safest opinion, in my opinion, is to use the pesky thing when writing academic and other scholarly texts and forget it for more informal writings. Or, use it wherever and whenever the need strikes you. I have a far weightier matter to consider when I write, like one space or two spaces after a period in typed/printed texts.

This, too, used to be a no brainer. Two spaces after a period. Pe-

riod. That was back in the dark ages when we used typewriters. Everything changed with word processors, closely followed by Word programs installed in computers. There’s actually an explanation for the change relating to the ease with which the human eye reads a printed page. Typewriters gave all letters the same amount of horizontal space which apparently drew the readers’ eyes in a way that made the two-space rule helpful in reading a block of text. Typeset texts have always followed the single space format, even before typewriters, because letters and characters in print are of different type size and the period, small as it is, creates an extra space by itself. Modern computer/word processing programs function like typesetters making the two-space rule outmoded and unnecessary. Editors simply convert all two-spacers to one. Done deal.

Just because we get it, doesn’t mean we like it. Even the most progressive of us balk at all the changes our modern world throws at us. Nostalgia beckons and it’s hard to let go. It’s not all commas and spaces either. It’s our very way of life.

Consider this. My alma mater, Purdue University, did a study to determine why some folks age more easily than others. The researchers thought they would find the older men and women who enjoyed good health would be the happier, more content lot. Results of the study showed something far different. The more functional, happier older people were those who were better able to adapt to change, of all kinds. Not that they abandoned fond, warm, fuzzy traditions, but they were ready and able to welcome the changes life presented and

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sometimes demanded.

We had a song we sang in Girls Scouts “way back when”. It went: “Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other gold.” Seems simplistic, but it’s not. If accepting changes like the new Oxford comma or one-space rule while recognizing the validity of the old is tough, how well will we adapt to bigger changes as they inevitably come along?

As Gilda said, “It’s always something . . .” So buckle up. It’s bound to be a bumpy ride sometimes, but it can also be an exhilarating one. Get out there and enjoy something new in our beautiful Texas Hill Country. There’s lots to sample – old and new - from music to restaurants, craft breweries, wineries, food trucks and festivals.

Happy summer!