

Writers craft-Potpourri

Tri colon: a rhetorical term that consists of three parallel clauses, phrases or words, which happen to come in quick succession without any interruption.

Three is the magic number in literary composition. To explain why that is, you have to look at the two. Whenever we see two things together we connect them.

- So if I say eat and drink you will note that those are the two major forms of ingestion. You might also see them as opposites—solid versus liquid.
- The same thought occurs to you if I say: the father and the son, the good and bad or truth and justice.

Even if we take two things that don't fit together, we find something to connect them. That's just how the human brain is built, we see a pair and we see a pattern.

You can always connect two dots with a straight line. But add another word and they're a tricolon

- Eat, drink and be merry
- Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- Truth, Justice and the American way.

With a tricolon you can set up a pattern and then break it.

- Lies, damned lies and statistics. The first two words establish the direction we are going, the third twists things for humorous purposes.

A problem with the rising tricolon is that it has to get to the end, when you go up you can't stop halfway. Two's company three's a list and the list has to be complete. That's the most important aspect of the tricolon.

- The good and bad together make up two sides of the moral quality. The good, the bad and the ugly, is a list of the major characters in a film.
- Eat and drink are two methods of ingestion, eat drink and be merry is a list of all the things you want to do this evening.
- When you finish a tricolon, you finish because there is nothing more to say. The list is complete. The sense of completeness makes the tricolon perfectly suited to grand rhetoric.
- It's three and three sounds good, two is only a pair and four is all wrong. Four doesn't work. It is always three and never four. Its location, location, location not location, location, location, location. That would be an example of Epizeuxis.

Epizeuxis: (Epi-zu-sis) a rhetorical device in which the words or phrases are repeated in a quick succession after each other for emphasis.

- “**Bond.** James **Bond.**”—James Bond

- “**Put out the light**, and then **put out the light**.” - Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act V, scene 2.
- “A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse! -*Richard III*
- “**Infamy! Infamy!** They've all got **it in for me!** -Talbot Rothwell, *Carry on Cleo*
- “**Doubtless** God could have made a better berry, but **doubtless** God never did.” - Dr William Butler (1535-1618), on strawberries, quoted by Izaak Walton in *The Complete Angler*.

Alliteration: a stylistic device in which a number of words, having the same first consonant sound, occur close together in a series.

- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers
- A tricolon with alliteration is especially effective.

Scatological (skat-o-logical) Dealing prudently with excrement and excretory functions.

Example:

- “Trump never lies,” said John.
- “Bull*&(%!@#,” Jason responded.

Dangling modifiers

- Running for the train a rat ran across my foot.
- Reaching the top of the hill, the graveyard was beautiful.
- The victim described the man as 6 foot tall with a ring in his nose weighing 160 pounds.
- While working as a Ranger in Yellowstone National Park, a grizzly bear crossed the road in front of my truck.

Missing hyphens and commas

- Headline: Man Helps Dog Bite Victim
- What do you see in a dirty movie theater?
- While I am eating my cat sits at the table.

Singular they

Singular “they,” the gender-neutral pronoun, has been named the Word of the Year by a crowd of over 200 linguists at the American Dialect Society's annual meeting in Washington, D.C. on Friday evening.

Singular they, which The Post officially adopted in its Style guide in 2015, is already a common habit in American speech. An example: “Everyone wants their cat to succeed.” Earlier, the so-called proper way to say it would have been, “Everyone wants his or her cat to succeed.”

Let's all become advocates for singular they.

Hyphens Most writers know when to use a hyphen. Any time you're using a compound word, you normally hyphenate it, such as:

- Eye-opener
- Over-exposed
- Forty-five-year-old woman

En Dash Often not on the keyboard—Most word processing programs have a way to insert it. On the most recent version of MS Word is CTRL + MINUS SIGN

The en dash is a little wider than the hyphen, but narrower than the em dash. Use an en dash to represent a span or range of numbers, like:

- The 2016-2017 school year
- Read chapters 4-8 tonight
- The Red Devils win 3-0

Em Dash The em dash is highly versatile. It can take the place of commas, colons, or parentheses in your sentences.

Use em dashes to enhance readability as they can be more emphatic than the mere comma.

- When she realized her mistake—a full three years later—it was by then too late to rectify the situation.
- A multitude of hues—red, orange, yellow, and brown—washed the trees in color.

You can use two em dashes to represent missing bits of words, whether you don't know them or you want them intentionally omitted.

- We thought Mr. D— — was the meanest bus driver on the route.
- “You're an a— —,” she said, turning her phone off.

If you need to blank out an entire word, you can use two or three em dashes in a row. Choose one length and use it consistently throughout your work.

- The rape victim, ———, took the stand the next day.

As with any good thing in life, use em dashes sparingly and with great purpose.