

TRENDS

Think before you type dot dot dot...

By Sam Ali and Kelsey Giordano 10/5/2016



Generational divides are nothing new. But what makes today's divide unique is technology. To see how this gap plays out in the office, and what the generations can do to understand one another better, Sam Ali (a Gen X'er) and Kelsey Giordano (a millennial) decided to tackle ellipses and the unfortunate breakdown in text and email communications that can occur when using those simple three dots.

The term ellipsis comes from the Greek word meaning "omission," and that's just what an ellipsis does if you're a true blue grammarian—it shows that something has been left out. Exactly *what* has been left out...? Well that depends a great deal on what side of the generation divide you're standing.

In what we hope will become an occasional series on Fidelity Central, Sam and Kelsey share a recent discussion they had on the topic.

Sam: I sent my teenage daughter a text the other day, responding to one of her messages. She had done well on a test at school and was letting me know. I responded "That's great...good job..."

Dot. Dot. Dot.

My decision to end my statement with an ellipsis didn't go over very well with my daughter.

"What's THAT supposed to mean?" she replied.

Apparently, those three dots come off as snarky and sarcastic to the younger set. I had no idea. I'm still not sure why. I asked my colleague, Kelsey Giordano, a devout millennial, what her feeling was about ellipses in emails and texts.



Kelsey: When my colleague Sam came to me asking for my general opinion of ellipses, I couldn't help but crumble into laughter.

Both being editors for Fidelity Central, conversation around punctuation was nothing out of the norm. The exceptional thing was that Sam, a Gen X'er, was asking me, a Gen Y'er, about that dreadful series of dots.

She had no idea what she was in for.

Sam: Kelsey's response, after laughing hysterically, was informative and worth sharing - one reason why we here at Fidelity Central decided to write this article.

It turns out those three dots are a telltale sign of a Baby Boomer or Gen X'er. No millennial in their right mind would ever end a sentence or statement in a text or email with an ellipsis.



Kelsey: Defending her daughter, I explained to Sam that her "good job..." reads sarcastically.

When Sam wrote "thank you..." to me, it sounded like she was finishing with "for nothing!" in her head.

Sam: That's exactly how my daughter interpreted my "That's great...good job..." text.

Just to be clear, sarcasm and snark was never my intent. In my Gen X mind, using those three dots was just a conversational pause, a way to give the reader a mental breather. For example, "I'm going to be late tonight...(pause) hope you guys are doing alright...(pause)"

That. Is. All.

Knowing what I know now however, my worldview has shifted. Clearly, those two sentences take on a whole new meaning, in the eyes of a millennial.



Kelsey: To me, ellipses denote an unfinished thought, or sarcastic, displeased tone. And I'm confident most other millennials would agree. Of course, since joining Fidelity I've learned that most colleagues, in fact, do not mean it that way. I've even noticed myself adding ellipses to my own emails, and it's disheartening. They're getting overused, oftentimes when other punctuation would actually be more fitting.

Sam: These days I'm more conscious of the punctuation I choose when writing texts and emails to my kids or honestly, anyone under 30.

'That's great...' has now been replaced by 'That's great!'

And 'Love you...' has been purged of all sarcasm. Now I just write, 'Love you.'

Have you noticed other every day issues that arise from generational differences? Share below, and Sam & Kelsey will duke it out in a future Fidelity Central article.

