Hmm, how can I reduce the amount of time I spend drawing cartoon thought bubbles?

Just use graphic styles with brushes and the Convert to Shape effect. The shape will grow as you type!!!

Show me how

Wow!

It looks like I should brush up on brushes....

These two bottom blurbs were made by applying the bubble brushes to ordinary shapes, not to text objects. That may work better when your text is not fairly rectangular

To apply the Thought Bubble Graphic Styles to live text, you will want to go to the Graphic Styles panel menu, and turn off the "Override Character Color" option. Otherwise applying the style to existing text will remove the text color.