

Commas

-Use a comma **before a coordinating conjunction** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) **IF** the parts of the sentence on **both** sides of the conjunction can stand as complete sentences.

We worked hard on the project, **but** we could not finish it in the time given.
She wanted to go shopping, **and** I wanted to get coffee.

TIP: To remember the coordinating conjunctions, just think FANBOYS - for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

FYI: A **comma splice** occurs when there are two parts of the sentence that could each be their own sentences joined only by a comma. This is also called a **run-on sentence**. If the two parts that could be their own sentences are joined only by a conjunction, it is called a **fused sentence**, which is also a run-on.

How to Correct a Comma Splice

1. Make one idea less important than the other by beginning the less important part with a subordinating conjunction (since, because, although, when, after).
2. Create two or more sentences by adding a period and a capital letter.
3. Add a semicolon.
4. Create a compound sentence using a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) and a comma.

Comma splice example: Lee Trevino was playing in the golf tournament, I hoped I could go.
Corrected:

1. Since Lee Trevino was playing in the golf tournament, I hoped I could go.
2. Lee Trevino was playing in the golf tournament. I hoped I could go.
3. Lee Trevino was playing in the golf tournament; I hoped I could go.
4. Lee Trevino was playing in the golf tournament, and I hoped I could go.

Fused sentence example: I am concerned but I am not angry.

Corrected: I am concerned, but I am not angry.

-Use a comma to **separate the elements of a list** of three or more items. The last comma in the series (before the conjunction) is optional.

He bought **eggs, milk, and bread** at the store.
We made **salad, steak, baked potatoes, and cake** for dinner.

FYI: Note that the use of “and” here is different from the earlier discussion. Be aware that words can function in a variety of ways in different situations.

-Use a comma **between coordinate adjectives** (words that describe). Coordinate adjectives are equal and reversible.

He was a **warm, affectionate** person.
Betty would be a **giving, caring, kind** teacher.

-Use a comma to **set off information** that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Julie’s vehicle, **the blue SUV**, was parked in the only available parking spot.
Moving to Hawaii, **which has always been my dream**, is not likely to happen.

-Use a comma **after an introductory phrase, prepositional phrase, or dependent clause** (a group of words containing a subject and a verb that is not a complete sentence).

When I moved away, I missed my friends.

Near the building, a kitten was hiding.

-Use a comma to set off **transitional elements** (however, therefore, nonetheless, also, otherwise, finally, instead, thus, of course, above all, for example, in other words, as a result, on the other hand, in conclusion, in addition).

The Bears, **for example**, had not been to the Superbowl in a long time.

However, their fans were still supportive.

In 2007, the Bears made it to the Superbowl, **finally**.

Practice Exercises:

Punctuate the following sentences with a comma or commas.

1. A popular leader is needed yet he also needs to be honest.
2. The cold air is very exhilarating but it can also be dangerous.
3. Walking through the frosty pines the expedition struggled.
4. When March came the tulips and crocuses peeked through the cold soil.
5. The colors of the Italian flag are red white and green.
6. The pioneers traveled over the mountains through the river valleys and across the plains.
7. What a wide smooth road this is!
8. The towering glacier-riddled Himalayas are the highest mountains in the world.
9. Have you ever been to Illinois land of Lincoln?
10. Monopoly a game developed during the Great Depression continues to be popular.
11. What in your opinion are the best hours for UCLA operations?
12. Traveling by car may be more educational however.

Answers: 1) ,yet 2) ,but 3) pines, 4) came, 5) red, white, 6) mountains, valleys, 7) wide, 8) towering, 9) Illinois, 10) Monopoly, Depression, 11) What, opinion, 12) ,however