

# Using Commas



# Correct Use of Commas

1. Commas should be used to separate items in a list.

## Examples:

His favorite desserts are chocolate pudding, apple pie, peach cobbler, and ice cream.

Monika wore a red, blue, purple, and white dress.



# Oxford Comma

We use a comma before the final 'and' to avoid confusion between the last two items in the list.

## Examples:

His favorite desserts are chocolate pudding, apple pie, peach cobbler and ice cream.

Without a comma after cobbler, it might seem that 'peach cobbler and ice cream' is one of his favorite desserts, as opposed to 'peach cobbler' and 'ice cream' being two separate favorites.



# Correct Use of Commas

2. Commas should be used before these conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so, to separate two independent clauses.

## Examples:

She was a fantastic cook, but she would never be as good as her mother.

He had toothache, so he called the dentist.



# Correct Use of Commas

3. Used to separate an introductory phrase or clause from the rest of the sentence.

## Examples:

Given the terrible weather conditions, the crew of the yacht were lucky to complete the race.

As the last ray of sun disappeared, Yasmine ran in the door for dinner.



# Correct Use of Commas

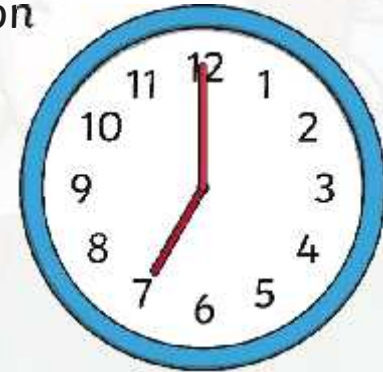
## 4. Used to indicate a nonrestrictive clause.

This phrase is sometimes known as an interrupting clause. A non-restrictive clause in a sentence adds information and can be removed without changing the meaning.

### Examples:

Milan, the funniest boy in the class, was often late for school.

PBS, based in Virginia, is a popular children's TV channel.



# Correct Use of Commas

5. Commas should be used to separate direct speech from the rest of a sentence.

**Examples:**

“Martina,” called Mom, “it’s time to leave for school.”

“Stop right there,” the man commanded. “This is private property.”



# Direct Speech with No Comma

A comma is not always needed in direct speech if another punctuation mark is used to separate the speech from the rest of the sentence.

## Examples:

“Give me the money!” he snarled.

“Where have you been?” asked Dad.

## Incorrect use:

“Give me the money!,” he snarled.

“Where have you been?,” asked Dad.





# Correct Use of Commas

6. Commas should be used to separate main and subordinate clauses.

## Examples:

While you're waiting, you can read a magazine.

Although I love football, swimming is my favorite sport.



# Correct Use of Commas

7. Commas should be used to separate elements in a sentence that express contrast.

**Examples:**

He thought the building was enormous, but ugly.

She enjoyed the music in the show, not the acting.



# Correct Use of Commas

8. Commas should be used to separate dates, years, towns, etc.

**Examples:**

I grew up in Orlando, Florida.

My grandma was born on March 25, 1942.



# Incorrect Use of Comma Splices

Comma splices occur when two independent clauses are joined by a comma. Comma splicing is inaccurate and should be avoided.

**Example:**

Julian usually gets along with everybody,  
he is an understanding person.



# Incorrect Use of Comma Splices

Instead of a comma splice, the writer could use:

## **A Semicolon:**

Julian usually gets along with everybody;  
he is an understanding person.

## **A Period:**

Julian usually gets along with everybody.  
He is an understanding person.



