

1. To separate items or adjectives in a list.

#### For example:

His favourite puddings were apple pie, rhubarb crumble and ice cream.

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



# Note that a comma is not normally used before the final item in a list.

It is, however, acceptable to use a comma before the final item if it could otherwise cause confusion.

#### For example:

His favourite puddings were apple pie, rhubarb crumble, and jelly and ice cream.

The use of the final comma indicates that 'jelly and ice cream' is considered a single item.

2. Before these conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so to separate two independent clauses.

#### For example:

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

He had a toothache, so he rang the dentist.

3. To separate a fronted adverbial from the rest of the sentence

#### For example:

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

As the last ray of sun disappeared, Yasmine crept silently out of the house.

### 4. To indicate parenthesis

Parenthesis in a sentence adds information and can be removed without changing the meaning.

#### For example:

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

CBBC, which is based in Manchester, is a popular children's TV channel.

5. To separate direct speech from the rest of a sentence

#### For example:

"Martina," called Mum, "it's time to leave for school."

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

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.

#### For example:

"Give me the money!" he snarled.
"Where have you been?" asked Dad.

#### NOT

"Give me the money!," he snarled.
"Where have you been?," asked Dad.



### 6. To separate main and subordinate clauses

#### For example:

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

Although I love football, swimming is my favourite sport.

# 7. To separate elements in a sentence that express contrast

#### For example:

He thought the building was enormous, but ugly.

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



8. To separate dates, years, towns etc.

#### For example:

I grew up in Kentish Town, North London.

My gran was born on March 25th, 1942.



## Comma splices

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

#### For example:

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



## Comma splices

Instead of a comma splice, the writer could use:

#### a semi colon:

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

#### or a full stop:

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

# Comma splices

Take care to avoid using a comma splice when punctuating speech. If the parts of speech are separate sentences, they need to be separated by a full stop NOT a comma.

### For example:

"That cake looks delicious," she said. "Where can I find the recipe?"

#### NOT

"That cake looks delicious," she said, "Where can I find the recipe?"



