

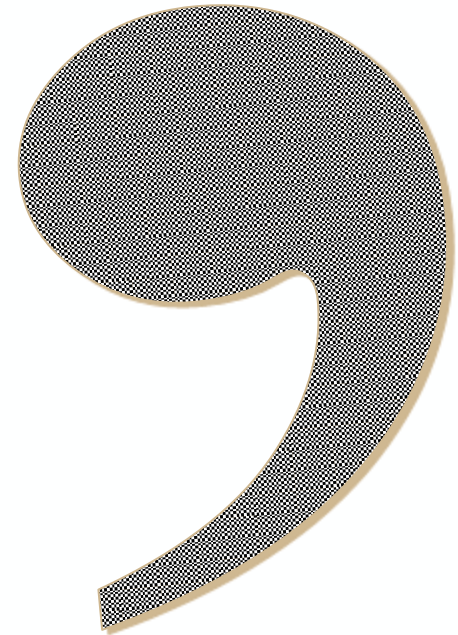
Conquering the Comma



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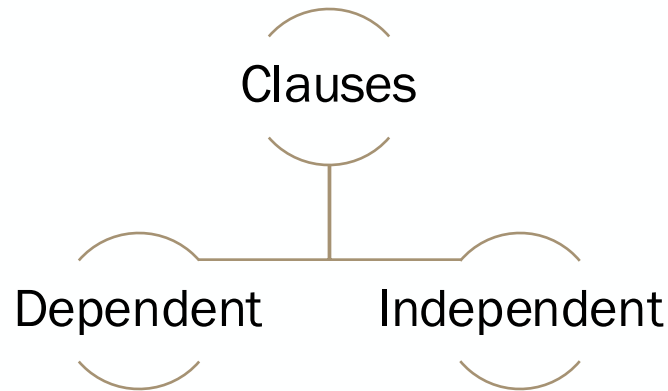
What is a Comma?

- A **comma** is a punctuation mark that indicates a break is needed in a sentence.
- Commas help to clarify meaning for the reader.



Clauses and Phrases

- A **clause** is a group of words that contains both a subject and a verb that complement each other.



- A **phrase** is a group of words that does not contain a subject or a verb that complement each other.

Sentence Structure: Independent Clauses

- A complete sentence has **at least** two components, a **subject** and a **verb**.
- The **subject** and **verb** must form a complete thought to be considered an independent clause.

The couple dances.

subject (S)

verb (V)

Sentence Structure: Compound Sentences

- **Compound Sentence:** a sentence that contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction.
- A **conjunction** joins words, phrases, and clauses together in a sentence.
- Consider the following acronym to help remember conjunctions:

For And Nor But Or Yet So

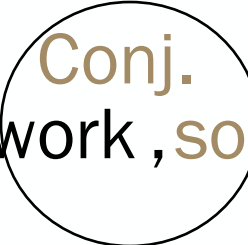
Sentence Structure: Compound Sentences

- The comma in a compound sentence is placed before the coordinating conjunction.

S V
Andy built a snowman, and
S V
Jeff played with his dog.

Sentence Structure: Compound Sentences

S V
Dan struggled with his homework, so
S V
his father helped him.



Sentence Structure: Dependent Phrases

- A **dependent clause** contains a subject and verb, but the clause cannot stand independently.
- Dependent clauses can often be identified by the use of **dependent clause markers**:
 - Because
 - Since
 - When
 - While
 - Until
 - If
 - As
 - Though
 - Although
 - Unless
 - After
 - Before
 - Once
 - Whether

Sentence Structure: Dependent Phrases

- Dependent phrases and clauses help to clarify and add detail to an independent clause.
- Dependent clauses may appear at the **beginning**, **middle**, or **end** of a sentence.

Sentence Structure: Introductory Clauses

- When a **dependent clause** is placed at the **beginning** of a sentence, place a comma between the independent clause and the dependent clause.

Dep. clause S V

Before he took the test, Dan struggled with this

Conj. S V

homework, so his father helped him.

Introductory Clause

Where would you place the comma in the following example?

Because it was raining **S** **V**
we decided to go to the movies.

Intro Clause **S** **V**
Because it was raining, we decided to go to the movies.

Dependent Clauses

- When a **dependent clause** is located after an independent clause, do not place a comma between the two.

S V

Dependent Clause

We decided to go to the movies **because** we were bored.

Essential Phrases and Clauses

- An **essential clause** or phrase is used to modify a noun. It adds information that is critical to the meaning of the sentence.
- Essential clauses are **not** set off by commas.

S essential phrase V
The **people** who work in my office are loud.

Essential Phrases and Clauses

- The word “**that**” is almost always an indicator of an essential phrase or clause.

S essential V
The **tiramisu** that I had at Joe’s was great.

Non-essential Phrases and Clauses

A **nonessential clause** or phrase adds extra information to a sentence. This information can be eliminated from the sentence without influencing the meaning of the sentence.

Always place commas around nonessential phrases and clauses.

S non-essential V

My **brother**, who lives across town, plans to throw a party.

Non-essential Phrases and Clauses

- Use commas to set off additional information:

S V
Steve said that he would propose to me on
non-essential
Valentine's Day, which is my favorite holiday.

Comma Practice

Would you place commas in the following sentences? If so, where?

- I am planning a trip to Paris which is one of the greatest cities in the world.
- The place that I would most like to see is the Eiffel Tower.
- Pierre, who is one of my business contacts, will meet me at the airport.

Sentence Structure: Commas in a Series

- Place commas in a sentence to **divide items in a list**.
- The commas will help the reader to avoid confusion.
- The comma before the conjunction is generally required, but it can be omitted if there is no possibility of confusion.

Sentence Structure: Commas in a Series

Consider the difference in the following:

- Last month, Alex dated Mary Ann Lee and Kim.
- Last month, Alex dated Mary, Ann, Lee, and Kim.
- Last month, Alex dated Mary Ann, Lee, and Kim.

How many women did Alex date?

Sentence Structure: Commas in a Series

- Commas should be **placed in series of words, phrases, or clauses.**
- Place commas in the following sentences:
 - Martina brushed her hair put on her pajamas and went to bed.
 - She fell asleep and dreamed that she was a princess she kissed a frog and she rescued her prince.

Commas with Adjectives

Use commas to **separate adjectives** that provide an equal description of a noun. The test:

- Can you put “and” between the adjectives?
- Can they be described in reverse order?
- If yes, use a comma.

Big blue house | Three hungry kittens | A cranky, bald man

To Correct a Comma Splice

Ways to consider correcting

S V Conj. S V
Dan struggled with his homework, so his father helped him.

S V S V
Dan struggled with his homework. His father helped him.

S V S V
Dan struggled with his homework; his father helped him.

To Correct a Comma Splice

How would you correct the following?

1. This semester I am taking calculus physics and economics.
2. Calculus is my best subject, I am certain I will get an A.
3. Although I am very busy, I still find time to have fun.
4. Last weekend my brother visited me and we went to a football game a party and a rock concert.

To Correct a Comma Splice

Sample Revisions (Not the Only Way!)

- 1. Original:** *This semester I am taking calculus physics and economics.*
Possible correction: *This semester I am taking calculus, physics, and economics.*
(This adds commas to separate the items in the list for clarity.)
- 2. Original:** *Calculus is my best subject, I am certain I will get an A.*
Possible correction: *Calculus is my best subject, and I am certain I will get an A.*
(One way to address the comma splice is by adding a coordinating conjunction.)
- 3. Original:** *Although I am very busy, I still find time to have fun.*
No correction needed: This sentence is already grammatically acceptable as is.
- 4. Original:** *Last weekend my brother visited me and we went to a football game a party and a rock concert.*
Possible correction: *Last weekend, my brother visited me, and we went to a football game, a party, and a rock concert.*

Thank You

Purdue University On-Campus Writing Lab
Krach Leadership Center (2nd Floor)

Web: <http://owl.purdue.edu>

Phone: (765) 494-3723



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