

Commas

Commas break up a sentence — fact. They also help it make more sense. Learn this page.

Commas go between items in a list

This is a comma: ,

You use commas to separate things in a list. Get to grips with these rules — they're pretty easy.

- 1) Put a comma after each item in the list except the last two.
- 2) Put 'and' or 'or' between the last two items.

'And' separates the last two things in the list.

Pete bought a hat, boots, a scarf and a pair of gloves.

The commas go between the items, not each word.

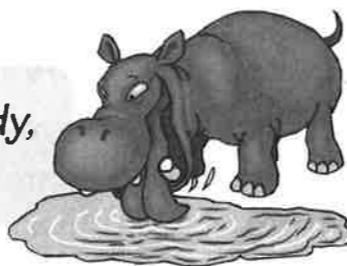
Would you like to go swimming, climbing, cycling or sailing?

The comma goes after all these except the last two.
'Or' goes between the last two things in the list.

This rule works for lists of adjectives too — as long as they're about the same thing:

The comma goes after each adjective except the last two.

The hippo was huge, greedy, smelly and dangerous.



Check your commas are in the correct place

If you can replace all the commas in a list with 'and' or 'or', you know they're correct:

Pete bought a hat and boots and a scarf and a pair of gloves. ✓

This still makes sense when all the commas are replaced with 'and', so the commas are in the correct place.

Commas

More ways to use commas for you — you're a lucky one today...

Commas join two points

You can use a comma with a conjunction to join two sentences together.

- 1) Take two sentences which are about the same thing:

I like climbing.

I'm not very good at it.

so and but yet or

These are some conjunctions. See p.22-23 for more.

- 2) Choose the correct linking word (conjunction):

I like climbing.

but

I'm not very good at it.

For more on clauses, see p.20-21.

- 3) Whack in a comma before the linking word, and... hey presto!

I like climbing, but I'm not very good at it.

COMPOUND SENTENCE

Commas separate clauses

Commas sometimes separate main clauses from subordinate clauses in a complex sentence.
When the subordinate clause comes first, you use a comma to separate the clauses.

'Even though it was raining' is a subordinate clause.
It doesn't make sense as a sentence on its own.

This is the main clause in the sentence. If you took away the other clause, this would still make sense.

Even though it was raining, we went to the beach.

COMPLEX SENTENCE

There's a comma here to separate the two clauses.

The subordinate clause doesn't make sense on its own.

Once I'd eaten my ice cream, I went home.

subordinate clause

comma

main clause

For more on complex sentences, see p.21.



Commas

You'll be pleased to know that this is the last page on commas you need to learn. Phew.

Commas help you add extra information

- 1) A pair of commas can separate extra information in the middle of a sentence — they go either side of the extra information. Take this simple sentence, for example:



Susannah's crocodile is always happy.

Commas that help you add extra information work in a similar way to brackets and dashes. See p.41.

Susannah's crocodile, who loves flowers, is always happy.

The bit between the pair of commas is extra information — it doesn't make sense on its own.

- 2) Commas are also used to join an adverbial phrase (see page 12) to the beginning of a sentence:

'After lunch' is an adverbial phrase.

After lunch, Susannah's crocodile is always happy.

Check you've used commas correctly

There's a dead easy way to check your commas. Your commas are correct if you can:

- 1) Remove the subordinate clause and comma and the sentence still makes sense:

When the park closed, we were sad. ➔ We were sad.

The information after the comma makes sense on its own, so the comma is in the right place.

- 2) Remove the extra information between a pair of commas and the sentence makes sense:



The fish, which had enormous teeth, ate the worm.

The fish ate the worm.

This sentence still makes sense once you've removed the extra information and the pair of commas. That means the commas are in the right place.

Quick Questions...

More commas — lucky you. Write out these sentences with commas in the correct places.

- 1) When the bell rang I packed up my things. 3) Billy my best friend is grumpy.
2) I love cakes so I often bake cupcakes. 4) He was short rude stupid and annoying.



Commas

To write well, you have to get to grips with commas...

1. Each of these sentences is missing a comma.

Put a comma in one of the boxes to make each sentence correct.

I couldn't ☐ find my hat ☐ my gloves or ☐ my satchel.

I would like a ☐ pen pal ☐ from Mexico ☐ Spain or Colombia.

My sister ☐ took me ☐ to the ice rink ☐ the cinema and the ☐ restaurant.

2. Use the words in the box to complete the sentence below.

Remember to add commas in the right places.

a pencil a piece of string a compass

I always carry

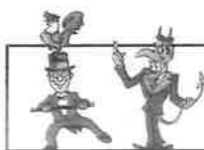
and a pound coin in case of emergencies.

3. Rewrite these sentences, adding in commas where they are needed.

Sean Phil Mike and Paula chased the llamas.

Chips pizza and spaghetti are my favourite foods.

Andy Diane and Caroline took their dog for a walk.



Commas

4. Rewrite these sentences, adding in commas correctly.

In the countryside there are lots of animals.

Because of the snow we can't get to school.

5. Rewrite this sentence, making it start with the adverbial.

An adverbial is a word or group of words that tells you when, where, how or how often something happens.

They went to the shops after she had left.

6. Tick the box next to the sentence with the comma in the correct place.

Although, they were very hungry they wouldn't eat the sausages. ☐

Although they were very hungry, they wouldn't eat the sausages. ☐

Although they were very hungry they wouldn't eat, the sausages. ☐

7. The box below contains a sentence that's been jumbled up. Draw a line from the beginning of the sentence to the end, going through the punctuation marks in the right places.

,

who is 84 years old

,

she couldn't
find my tortoise

.

Despite trying really hard





Commas

8. Circle the version of 'Are you going to eat Rob?' that best fits the description in bold.

Asking Rob if he's going to eat.

Are you going to eat Rob?

Are you going, to eat Rob?

Are you going to eat, Rob?

9. Look at these sentences.

My dogs like to eat bark and play.

My dogs like to eat, bark and play.

How does the comma in the second sentence change its meaning?

10. Rewrite each sentence, adding commas to avoid ambiguity.
The first one has been done for you.

Doctor Timmy isn't feeling very well.

Doctor, Timmy isn't feeling very well.

While Rina drew her little brother painted.

Ed couldn't swallow his tonsils hurt and his ears ached.

*'Avoiding ambiguity'
means making the
meaning of something
clearer and less confusing.*



Commas

11. Use the phrases in the box to make a complete sentence.
Remember to add commas where they are needed.

won the lottery yesterday

Martin's dad

who has always been lucky

12. Rewrite each sentence, adding the words in the box in the right place, using commas.
The first one has been done for you.

Raisins are my favourite snack. which are dried grapes

Raisins, which are dried grapes, are my favourite snack.

Tracy told me I should go. who is my best friend

My house is near the canal. which has a blue door

13. Add commas to the sentences to show parenthesis.

My aunt who is very kind took me to the cinema.

The book I'm reading which is about outer space has a red cover.

Owen's favourite jumper which has dinosaurs on it is made of wool.

*Extra information that is surrounded
by a pair of commas (or brackets
or dashes) is called 'a parenthesis'.*

*Punctuation Pythons always put their commas in the right
places. Tick one of the boxes to show how you got on.*

