

Comma Packet



My comma became a(n)...

Comma Uses

COMMA RULE #1 – THE COMMA IN A SERIES: Use commas to separate items in a series.

What is a "series"?

A "series" is a list of 3 or more items, the last two of which are joined by **and, or, or nor**.

_____, _____, and _____

EXAMPLES:

series of single words

cups, jars, and plates

saw, screamed, and cried

running, jumping, diving, or swimming (4 items)

series of phrase/clause (groups of words)

cups of sugar, jars of honey, and plates of spaghetti

saw the mugging, screamed loudly, and cried about it

Running around the track, jumping over hurdles, diving off
the board, or swimming across the pool.

whom you see, where you go, or what you do

Any of these can be put into sentence form.

Please put the *cups, jars, and plates* into the cabinet.

The young girl *saw the mugging, screamed loudly, and cried about it* for days afterward.

I really don't care *whom you see, where you go, or what you do*.

The important things to remember about using commas in series are these:

1. A series includes 3 or more items of the same type (words or groups of words).
2. The series is connected by **and, or, or nor** before the last item.
3. A comma separates items in the series, including the final item preceded by **and, or, or nor**.

Comma Uses: Exercise 1

Directions: Rewrite the below sentences on the given line, placing commas where commas are needed. If a sentence needs no comma, write "correct" in the text box.

1. The English professor adjusted her glasses shuffled her notes and began her lecture.

2. A jogger ran down the alley and onto my lawn this morning.

3. She stepped around the grass across the sidewalk and onto the curb.

4. Neither rain sleet nor hail shall keep away the U.S. mail.

5. A glass of milk a cup of tea or a mug of coffee will be fine.

6. Planning the itinerary buying supplies and packing emergency items are all part of good camping preparation.

7. I'll have pickles ketchup mustard and onions on this hot dog.

8. Her living room was cold dark damp and musty.

9. The poor child did not know how to walk or talk.

10. Who sent you why you came and what you intend to do are none of my concern.

COMMA RULE #2 – THE COMMA WITH COORDINATE ADJECTIVES: Use commas between coordinate adjectives.

What are “coordinate adjectives”?

“Coordinate adjectives” are adjectives placed next to each other that are equal in importance.

Two tests to determine whether adjectives are coordinate are the following:

1. See whether “and” can be smoothly placed between them.
2. See whether the adjectives’ order can be reversed.

Look at this example.

We saw a *happy, lively* poodle.

In this example, a comma belongs between *happy* and *lively* because they are coordinate adjectives.

Test to make certain:

First, try the “and” test.

We saw a *happy* (and) *lively* poodle.

And placed between the 2 adjectives sounds smooth.

Second, try reversing the adjectives.

We saw a *lively, happy* poodle.

When the adjectives are reversed, the sentence still makes sense.

Thus, *happy* and *lively* are coordinate adjectives in the example and should be separated by a comma.

We saw a happy, lively poodle.



CAUTION: Not all adjective pairs are coordinate adjectives. Thus, not all adjectives should be separated from one another by a comma.

Look at this example.

We saw a **young golden** retriever.

In this example, no comma belongs between the two adjectives **young** and **golden** because they are not coordinate adjectives.

How can we know?

First, try the “and” test.

We saw a **young (and) golden** retriever.

And placed between the two adjectives does not fit smoothly.

Second, try reversing the adjectives.

We saw a **golden young** retriever.

When the two adjectives are reversed, they do not make sense.

Thus, **young** and **golden** are not coordinate adjectives and should not be separated by a comma.

We saw a young golden retriever.



Comma Uses - Exercise 2

Directions: Rewrite the below sentences on the given line, placing commas as needed between all coordinate adjectives. If the adjectives in the sentence are not coordinate (apply tests), then do not add commas, but write "correct" in the text box.

1. We enjoyed the clean crisp smell of the mountain air.

2. Beth was a student whose intelligent conscientious mind earned her good grades.

3. Dr. Bean gave us a hard final examination.

4. She ate the sweet juicy apple with a vengeance.

5. The awkward shy teenager felt nervous about his first date.

6. When the team failed to score, the bored restless crowd began to shout.

7. Marianne's light blue dress fluttered in the breeze.

8. The gentle kind giant helped Jack climb back down the vine.

9. We saw several large apples on the young tree.

10. Registration was improved this year by the addition of an efficient courteous staff.

COMMA RULE #3 – THE COMMA IN A COMPOUND SENTENCE: Use a comma before **and, but, or, nor, for, so, or yet** to join two independent clauses that form a compound sentence.

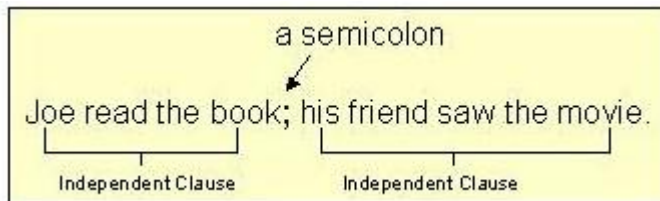
What is a compound sentence?

A **compound sentence** is a sentence that has 2 independent clauses.

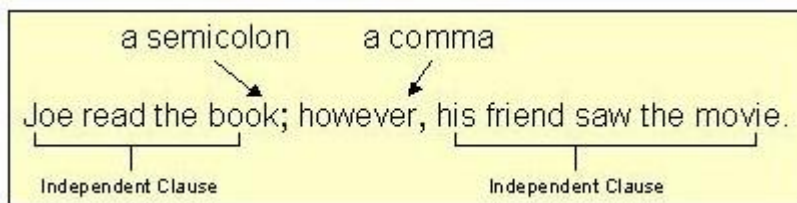
An **independent clause** is a group of words with a subject and verb that expresses a complete thought. It is also known as a **simple sentence**. An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence.

The two independent clauses in a compound sentence can be joined by:

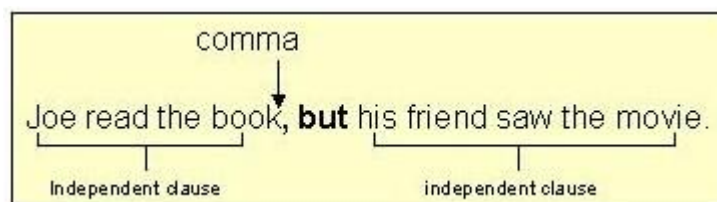
A. Semicolons



OR



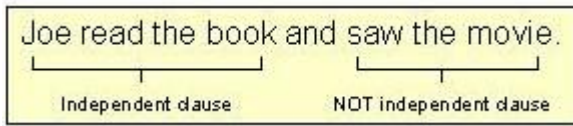
B. A comma and one of the seven joining words: **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so**. (Taken together, the first letters spell "**FANBOYS.**")



This last type of compound sentence is the one we will concentrate on for comma use.

A compound sentence must have two independent clauses – not just two verbs, two nouns, or two groups of words that are not independent clauses.

Look at this example.

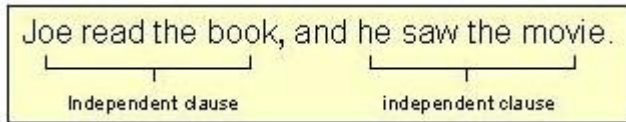


In the above example, two verb groups are being joined by **and**. The second verb group does **NOT** have a subject; thus, it is **NOT** an independent clause.

Therefore, **NO** comma belongs before **and**.

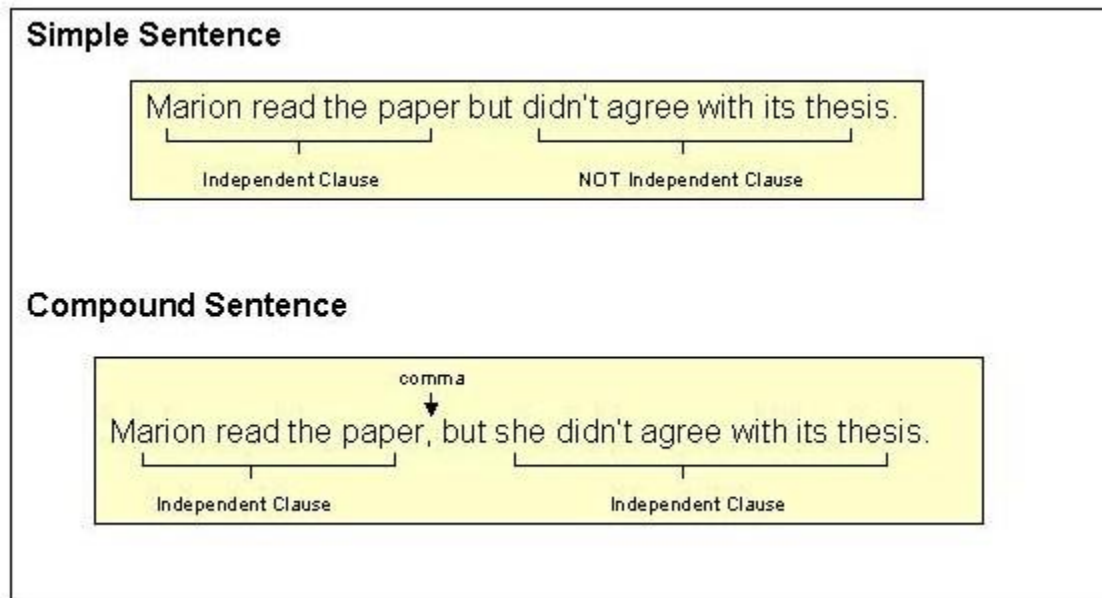
This example is a **simple sentence** with a **compound verb**, not a compound sentence.

However, we can make this sentence into a compound sentence by simply making the last verb part into an independent clause.



Now we have a “bona fide” compound sentence. The two independent clauses are separated by a comma and the word **and**.

Here are some other examples which illustrate the difference between compound elements in simple sentences (no comma) and true compound sentences (comma).



Simple Sentence

The army and the marines were summoned.

two noun subjects joined by **and**

Compound Sentence

The army was summoned, and the marines were put on alert.

Independent Clause

Independent Clause

Simple Sentence

Joe changed his classes or his work hours.

Independent Clause

two noun phrases joined by **OR**

Compound Sentence

Joe changed his classes, or he adjusted his work schedule.

Independent Clause

Independent Clause

Now you are ready to try an exercise.

Make certain that you:

1. Know the seven joining words (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*).
2. Can distinguish between simple sentences with compound elements (no comma) and compound sentences (comma).

Major Comma Uses - Exercise 3

Directions: Rewrite the below sentences on the given line, placing commas as needed. NOTE: some sentences are not compound sentences and, thus, require no commas. Write "correct" in the text box for these sentences.

1. You must go immediately or you will not get a place in the class.

2. I am copying this recipe for I want to make this dish someday.

3. Harold fed the cats and walked the dog.

4. He will be elected tomorrow and he will be a good leader.

5. This class is exciting but it is hard.

6. No students stood in line so Mary walked straight to the registration table.

7. She is a woman of great courage and the town will honor her today.

8. The band and the cheerleaders gave the team plenty of support.

9. The coat was lovely yet it was not the coat she wanted.

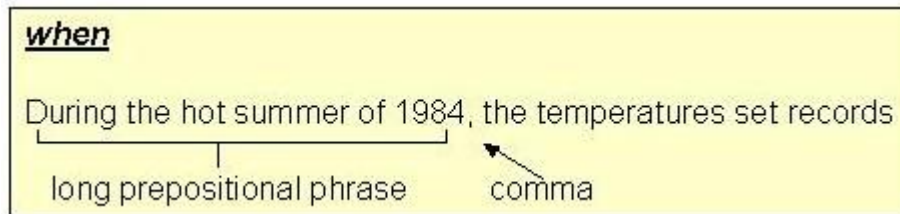
10. John traveled to France and then to Spain.

COMMA RULE #4 – THE COMMA WITH INTRODUCTORY WORDS: Place a comma after introductory phrases that tell *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*.

Specifically . . . use a comma:

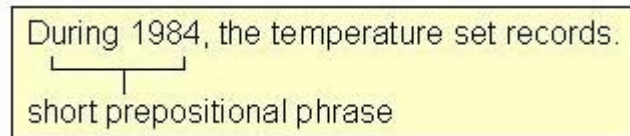
1. After a long introductory phrase.

Example:



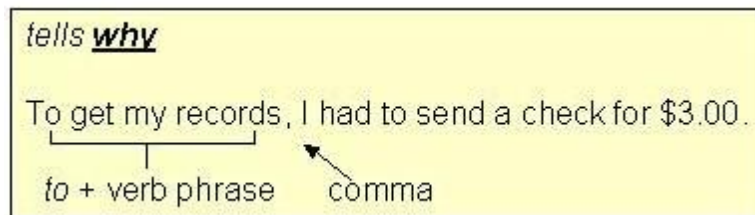
Usually, it is NOT necessary to use a comma after short introductory prepositional phrases.

Example:



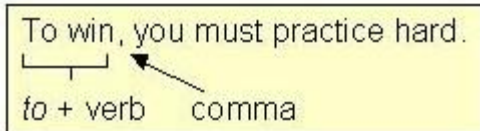
2. After an introductory phrase made up of “to” plus a verb and any modifiers (“infinitive”) that tells *why*.

Example:



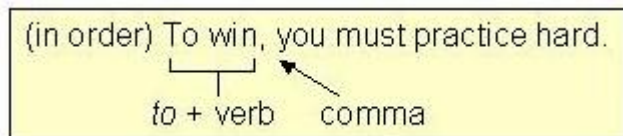
Use a comma even after a short “to” + verb phrase that answers *why*.

Example:

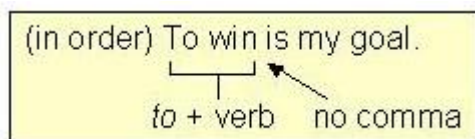


You can tell you have this kind of introductory “to” + verb phrase when you can put the words “in order” in front of the phrase.

Example:



Be careful! Not all introductory “to” phrases tell **why**.

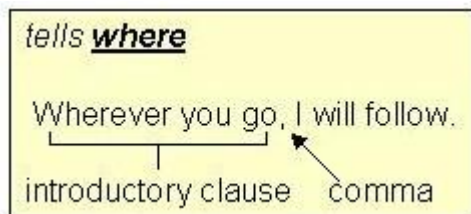
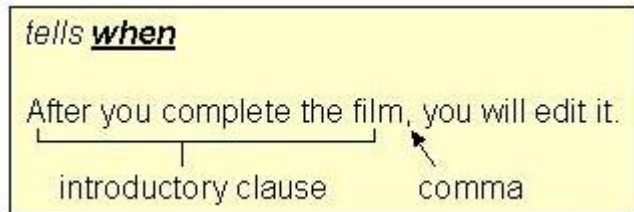


3. After an introductory clause that answers

when? **where?** **why?** **how?** **to what degree?**

(A “clause” is a group of words with a subject and a verb.)

Examples:



tells **why**

If the train is on time, we will meet you.

└──────────┘
|
introductory clause comma

tells **why**

Although the train is late, we will still meet you.

└──────────┘
|
introductory phrase comma

tells **how**

As if we were still friends, hold my hand.

└──────────┘
|
introductory clause comma

NOTE: When such a clause comes at the **end** of a sentence, do NOT use a comma.

Examples:

Hold my hand as if we were still friends.

no comma └──────────┘
|
end clause tells **how**

He forgot his lines because he was tired.

no comma └──────────┘
|
end clause tells **why**

Comma Uses - Exercise 4

Directions: Rewrite the below sentences on the given line, placing commas as needed. If no comma is needed, write "correct" in the text box below the sentence.

1. Because she did not consult her calendar Merrill missed her date.

2. I am copying this recipe for I want to make this dish someday.

3. To earn an "A" in Dr. Long's course one must work very hard.

4. After many days at the mine the workers were tired and angry.

5. As though nothing had happened she sat down comfortably.

6. Unless fiscal policies are changed the country will face a depression.

7. To get to my house make a right hand turn.

8. Before the war and bloodshed in that country the people were happy.

9. When Harriet finished the book she gave it to Harry.

10. Harriet gave the book to Harry when she finished it.

COMMA RULE #5 – THE COMMA WITH NONESSENTIAL WORDS, PHRASES, AND CLAUSES: Separate with a comma any nonessential words or groups of words from the rest of the sentence.

1. Separate “interrupter” words like *however*, *nevertheless*, *yes*, *no*, *of course*, from the rest of the sentence.

Examples:

The man forgot, however, where he had placed his keys.
comma nonessential word comma

However, the man forgot where he has placed his keys.
nonessential word comma

2. Separate a “renamer” (an appositive) from the rest of the sentence with a comma.

Example:

Mr. Jones, the foreman at the plant, is on vacation.
comma appositive – renames Mr. Jones comma

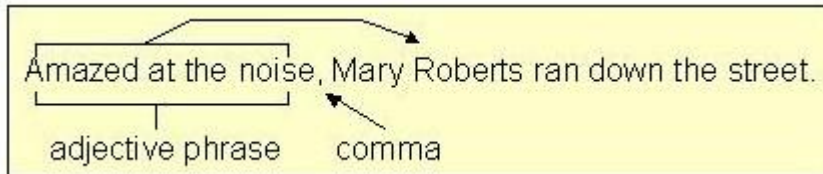
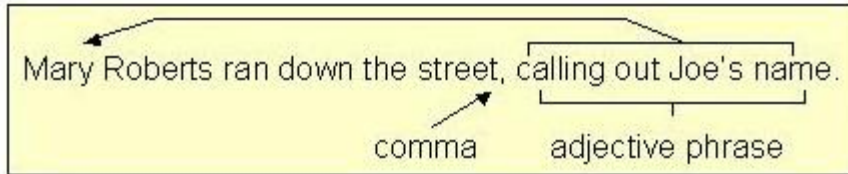
3. Separate adjective phrases from the essential parts of the sentence.

(An “adjective” describes or limits a noun.)

Examples:

Mary Roberts, calling out Joe's name, ran down the street.
comma adjective phrase comma

Calling out Joe's name, Mary Roberts ran down the street.
adjective phrase comma



In each instance above, “Mary Roberts ran down the street” comprises the **essential** part of the sentence. The adjective phrases are **nonessential** and should be separated from the rest of the sentence with commas.

4. Separate nonessential *adjective clauses* from the rest of the sentence.

There are two kinds of adjective clauses:

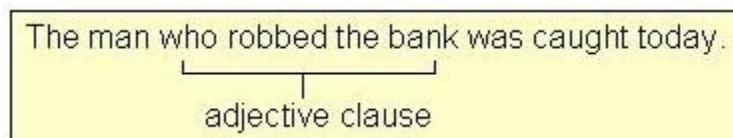
- one that is needed for the sentence to be complete (ESSENTIAL)
- one that is NOT needed for the sentence to be complete (NONESSENTIAL)

The **essential** adjective clause should NOT be separated from the sentence with commas.

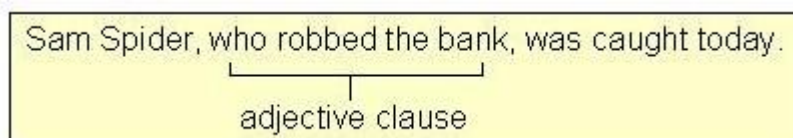
The **nonessential** adjective clause (like other nonessential elements) SHOULD be separated with commas.

Two examples illustrate the difference:

A.

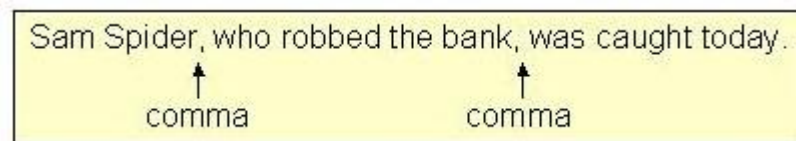


B.



Look at example A. If we remove the adjective clause “who robbed the bank,” the sentence reads, “The man was caught today.” Without the adjective clause (“who robbed the bank”), we do not know *which* man was caught. Thus, the adjective clause is needed to complete the sentence’s meaning. In other words, this adjective clause is **essential**. As the rule notes, do not use commas around essential adjective clauses.

Now look at example B. If we remove the adjective clause “who robbed the bank,” the sentence reads, “Sam Spider was caught today.” Without the adjective clause (“who robbed a bank”), we do know which man was caught (Sam Spider). Thus, the adjective clause is NOT needed to complete the sentence’s meaning. In other words, this clause is **nonessential**. Following the rule, you should separate this adjective clause from the rest of the sentence.



Sam Spider, who robbed the bank, was caught today.

↑ comma ↑ comma

REMEMBER, there are 4 nonessential elements that should be separated from the rest of the sentence with commas:

1. “interrupter” words like **of course, however**
2. “renamers” (appositives)
3. nonessential adjective phrases
4. nonessential adjective clauses

Comma Uses – Exercise 5

Directions: Rewrite the below sentences on the given line, placing commas as needed. If no comma is needed, write "correct" in the text box below the sentence

1. Recognizing the thief the policemen arrested him immediately.

2. The student who writes the best paper will receive the best grade.

3. Elias Moxley a famous trial lawyer will represent Ms.Tishman.

4. Mary realizing her bad situation tried to convince her boss to give her a raise.

5. Bees for example have four wings.

6. Ellen Terry who wrote letters to George Bernard Shaw was a famous actress.

7. No you may not attend the game.

8. Idaho which is famous for its potato crop is located in the Midwest.

9. A man who writes mysteries is visiting the school this week.

10. Undaunted by the loss Georgette resumed her law practice.

Comma Usage- Rule # 6

Dates and Addresses - When a date or address with several parts occurs in a sentence, place a comma between each element and *after* the last part.

Examples:

The house at *100 West 67th Street, Baltimore, MD 21210,* was sold today.
My son was born on *January 5, 1976,* in *Chicago, Illinois.*

Caution: When the date or address has only one element or has its individual parts separated by words in the sentence, do not use a comma within or after the date or address.

Incorrect:

She lives at *100 West 67th Street, in Baltimore.*
It was on *January 5,* that my son was born.

Correct:

She lives at *100 West 67th Street in Baltimore.*
↑
no comma

It was on *January 5* that my son was born.
↑
no comma

Rule 6- Revise the following sentences by adding commas where they are needed.

1. Send a copy of the report to John Bell 321 Homeland Avenue Seattle Washington before the end of the month.

2. The December 2006 issue of *Pets* contains an article about dog training.

3. We will be moving to Portland Oregon sometime in April.

4. Bill bought his first car on September 12 2004 and wrecked it the next day.

5. We didn't receive the letter dated May 24 2006 until May of 2007.

6. My friend lives at 241 Montrose Street in Baltimore.

7. He went to San Diego on October 16 2006 and returned on October 22 2006.

8. She wondered what the world would be like on September 11 3001.

9. Mary's father has lived at 324 South Daisy Street Apartment 2B Miami Florida for many years.

10. We will celebrate your birthday this year on March 2 because we will be out of town on March 1.
