

# Conquering the Comma



**“I have trouble with punctuation. I just don’t  
have any comma sense.”**

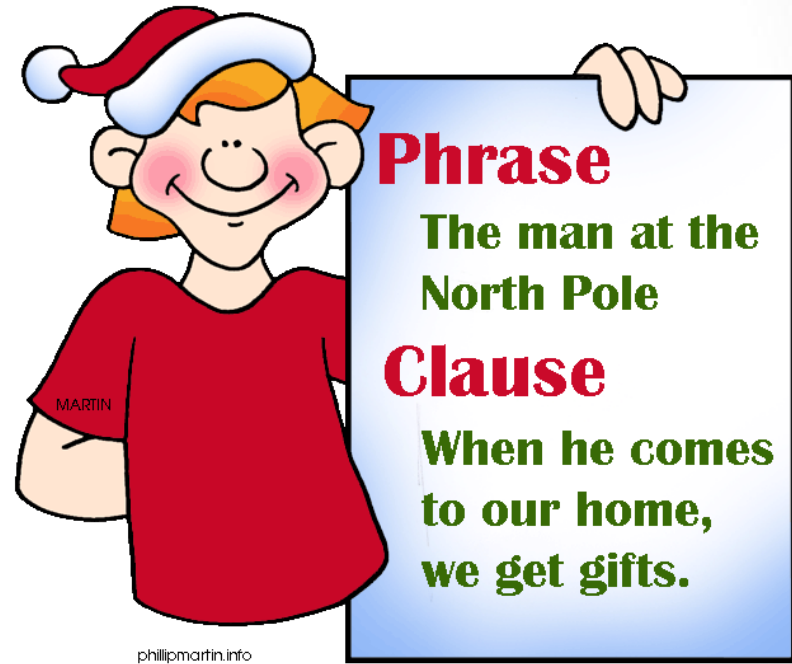
# What Is a Comma?



- A comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause 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



# Clauses and Phrases

Clause: contain a subject and verb.

If they form complete thoughts, we call them independent clauses.

If they form incomplete thoughts, we call them dependent or subordinate clauses.

Phrase: are word clusters lacking subject and verb combinations.

# Clauses and Phrases

Clause examples:

- 1) We collected the data (Complete sentence with a subject and verb - this is an independent clause.)
- 2) While we collected the data (FRAGMENT as is even though it has a subject and verb - this is a dependent clause.)

Phrase example: While collecting data

(also a fragment, but not even a subject and verb!)

# Sentence Structure: A Simple Sentence

- A complete sentence has two components, a subject and a verb.
- The subject and verb must form a complete thought to be considered a simple sentence.

The couple dances.  
subject (S) verb (V)



# Sentence Structure: Compound Sentence

- A sentence that contains two simple sentences joined by a conjunction is called a compound sentence.
- A conjunction joins words, phrases, and clauses together in a sentence.
- Conjunctions
  - for
  - and
  - nor
  - but
  - or
  - yet
  - so

# Sentence Structure: Compound Sentence

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



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



# Sentence Structure: Compound Sentence



Where would you place the comma in the following sentence?

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

# Sentence Structure: Pattern for the Compound Sentence

We see these as sentences with a pattern:

SV, conj. SV

He journeyed a long way, for his home was across the ocean.

S V ,conj. S V

I built a very strong boat, yet it still sunk to the ground.

S V ,conj. S V

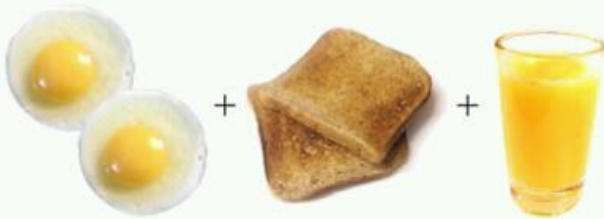
# Sentence Structure: Commas in a Series

## WHY I STILL USE THE OXFORD COMMA

shortee.tumblr.com

WITH:

I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.



WITHOUT:

I had eggs, toast and orange juice.



- Place commas in a sentence to divide items in a list.
- The commas will help the reader to avoid 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.

ate?

# 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 so, use a comma.

big blue house    three hungry kittens

a cranky, ungrateful man

# Sentence Structure: Direct Address

- A noun in direct address is the name or title of a person being spoken to.
- Use commas to set off nouns in direct address.

- Example:

Mrs. Barnhart, I love learning grammar!

I want to learn more about commas, Tracy, so I can be the best writer!

# Sentence Structure: Appositives

- An appositive is a noun or phrase that identifies the person or thing it follows.
- Use commas to set off MOST appositives.
- Do not use commas to set off a short appositive, such as one name.

This is my friend Kara.



# Sentence Structure: Appositives

My **brother**, **the biggest nerd I know**, **plans** to throw a party!

**S**                      **appositive**                      **V**

# Commas in Quotations

- Follow your rules for dialogue punctuation.
- If the *He said* comes first, place the comma after said.

He said, “I know Kung Fu.”

- If the *he said* comes after the quote, place the comma inside the quotation marks after the last word in the quotation.

“I’ll dance with you,” he said.

# Commas in Quotations

- If the *he said* comes in the middle of the quote, place the comma inside the quotation marks after the last word in the first part of the quote and after the *he said*.

“Put the box,” he said, “in the house.”

# Time to Practice

You will get into groups to practice/model the “varied sentence structure” possible in a 7-sentence paragraph. Here’s the pattern you must follow:

- 1) Simple sentence
- 2) Compound sentence
- 3) Commas in a series
- 4) Commas use to separate adjectives
- 5) Appositive
- 6) Semicolon sentence
- 7) Colon sentence

# A Common Comma Error: The Comma Splice

- A comma splice is an error in which two sentences are joined by a comma.

We had a nice time, I hope we can meet again soon.

S V

S V

The Internet has revolutionized the business world,

S

V

online sales have increased dramatically this year.

S

V

# To Correct a Comma Splice

- Insert a conjunction between the two sentences.
- Start a new sentence.
- Insert a semi-colon between the two sentences.

- We had a nice time, and I hope we can meet again soon.
- We had a nice time. I hope we can meet again soon.
- The Internet has revolutionized the business world; online sales have increased dramatically this year.