

complex, along with several others recently constructed in the vicinity of Main Street, bring hundreds of additional cars onto our primary thoroughfare on a daily basis.

In addition to the apartment complexes, the town has also approved the addition of several new restaurants and bars on Main Street. While I realize these establishments bring valuable revenue to our town, they also bring additional traffic to properties that are not large enough to support the necessary parking. This forces more people to park in nearby neighborhoods. Furthermore, the town has done very little to enforce the noise ordinance. While live music must end by 11:00 p.m., there's still the noise from many patrons sitting outside the restaurants and bars.

I truly love this town and have never considered living anywhere else, but my resolve is starting to dwindle. Do we really want to live in a place that devalues its history and longtime residents for the sake of being new and the trendy? Do we really want to live in a place that gives developers and business owners free reign? I hope your answer is no, and I hope the town will listen to its residents and take the necessary steps before it's too late!

These interrogative sentences are rhetorical questions. They're intended to point out negative aspects of the current situation.

The exclamatory sentence conveys the writer's emotion.

Lesson 9.3

Using Commas

Sometimes, a small punctuation mark can make a big difference.

Incorrect Let's eat Grandpa.

Correct Let's eat, Grandpa.

It's important to understand what commas can and cannot do. Like the previous example demonstrated, commas have the power to completely change the meaning of a sentence. Using them correctly shows that you are a competent communicator.

Further Resources

Check out this article (<http://priceconomics.com/the-most-expensive-typo-in-legislative-history/>) to read about the most expensive typo in history!

In this lesson, you will learn about commas:

The Purposes and Functions of Commas

Avoiding Unnecessary Commas

Exclamatory sentences communicate something with strong emotion and end with exclamation points. Consider the examples below.

- | I can't believe we won!
- | Don't walk on the grass!

Helpful Hint

In informal writing, many people use multiple ending punctuation marks. However, remember that multiple exclamation points, question marks, or a mixture of the two is usually inappropriate for formal writing.

Lesson Wrap-up

Key Terms

- Action Verb:** a verb that indicates a physical or mental action
- Declarative Sentence:** a sentence that makes a statement
- Dependent Clause:** a group of words with a subject and verb that does not express a complete thought
- Direct Question:** a sentence that asks the audience a question and usually ends with a question mark
- Exclamatory Sentence:** a sentence that communicates strong emotion
- Helping Verb:** a word that changes the form of the main verb so that it grammatically fits the sentence
- Imperative Sentence:** a sentence that makes a command
- Implied Subject:** the subject of a sentence when the speaker is talking directly to the audience
- Independent Clause:** a group of words with a subject and verb that expresses a complete thought
- Indirect Question:** a sentence that tells the audience about a question and usually ends with a period
- Interrogative Sentence:** a sentence that asks a question
- Linking Verb:** a verb that links the subject to a description
- Subject:** who or what the sentence is about

Writing Application: The Characteristics of Sentences

Read the following letter to the editor arguing against local construction projects. It uses a mixture of independent and dependent clauses to create sentences that clearly communicate the author's thoughts.

Letter to the Editor

As a longtime resident of this town, I am saddened by the massive influx of development projects that have taken over Main Street. Not only are they inconsistent with the historical atmosphere of the community, these projects have introduced traffic, congestion, and noise pollution.

This dependent clause gives more information about the writer and his or her connection to the town.

Consider the new four-story apartment complex that towers over Main Street. The modern architecture looks out of place and gaudy. More importantly, its parking was poorly designed, forcing residents to park their cars on the streets of the nearby neighborhood. This

This sentence combines an independent and dependent clause.

The Purposes and Functions of Commas

Commas are used in many ways. Let's take a look at how they function in different writing scenarios.

Helpful Hint

One common strategy for adding commas to a sentence is reading the sentence aloud and adding commas whenever your voice naturally pauses. While this will work in many cases, it's not a completely error-proof strategy. When you proofread, review the rules of commas to make sure that you catch as many errors as possible.

Lists

A list includes a series of three or more items in a sentence. The items may be single words, phrases, or clauses. Each item in the list, except the last one, is followed by a comma.

My cousin traveled extensively in California, Texas, and Florida during his first year of retirement.

This morning I woke up early, ate a big breakfast, and hurried to the university.

Further Resources

A comma used with a conjunction before the last item in a list is commonly known as the Oxford comma. To learn more about the history of the Oxford comma and the debate about its use, watch this video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptM7FzyjtRk&feature=youtu.be>) from TED Education.

Compound Sentences

Compound sentences include two or more independent clauses, which express complete thoughts. These clauses can be joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction, which joins similar words or a group of words. The pattern would look like this:

Independent Clause	Comma + Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause
Mary wants to see the new <i>Star Wars</i> film	, but	John wants to watch March Madness.
The new Fitbit includes GPS	, so	I plan to order one before I travel.

Helpful Hint

It's easy to make errors when writing a compound sentence. However, not using a comma in this type of sentence is incorrect because the coordinating conjunction is not strong enough to join the independent clauses.

Incorrect: My niece loves swimming and my nephew loves gymnastics.

Likewise, writing the sentence with only the comma and omitting the coordinating conjunction is a comma splice error.

Incorrect: My niece loves swimming, my nephew loves gymnastics.

When joining independent clauses, always include both the comma and the coordinating conjunction.

Introductory Elements

Using introductory elements at the beginnings of sentences creates variety. An introductory element could be a word, phrase, or clause. No matter what, introductory elements should be separated from the main sentence by a comma.

Introductory words **Unfortunately**, the cold weather ruined our plans for a weekend trip to the beach.

Introductory phrases **During the hour-long layover**, Savanna checked her email and texts.

Introductory clauses **After a blizzard closed the interstate around Denver**, the weary travelers were forced to seek shelter at motels and rest stops.

To learn more about independent and dependent clauses, see Lesson 9.

On Your Own

For each type of introductory element, create your own example.

Introductory Type	Examples
Introductory word	
Introductory phrase	
Introductory clause	

Interrupting or Extra Elements

A sentence may be interrupted by nonessential information that adds detail but is not necessary to make the sentence complete. These elements can be words, phrases, or clauses. Interrupting elements must be surrounded by commas.

Sabrina, who recently moved here from San Francisco, hopes to apply for the Presidential Scholarship.

Extra information should be separated from essential information with a comma.

The emotional ending of *Finding Dory* is heart-rending, making me cry each time I watch it.

Helpful Hint

By putting the interrupting element between commas, you indicate that the information may be omitted without changing the meaning of the main sentence. Think of the commas like “handles” that someone could use to lift the interrupting information out of the sentence.

On Your Own

How are commas used in the following sentences? Enter your answer in the right-hand column. The first one has been done for you.

Examples	Comma Use
If we plan carefully, we can afford to take a vacation next summer.	Introductory element
Fred, who has always lived in Michigan, plans to attend college in San Francisco.	
Watching sports on television is exciting, but participating in physical activities is healthier.	
Without a doubt, cell phones are an important part of communication.	
Popular social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest.	

Quotations

Quoted material can usually be divided into two sections: a **signal phrase** and the **actual quote**. To separate these two sections, use a comma.

Signal Phrase

My friend exclaimed,

Quote

“Congratulations on the new job!”

The signal phrase may occur at the beginning, end, or middle of the sentence.

The TSA officer said, “Please show me your boarding pass and driver’s license.”

“Please show me your boarding pass and driver’s license,” the TSA officer said.

“Please,” said the TSA officer, “show me your boarding pass and driver’s license.”

To learn more about quotations, see Lesson 9.5.

Writing Environment: Professional

Comma rules vary depending on the context. For example, in Associated Press (AP) style, which is used by journalists, commas are not included before the conjunction in a simple series.

The fire originated on Fifth Street and spread to the surrounding neighborhoods of Brickton, Granger and Trent.

Salutations and Closings

Personal letters often begin with a greeting, also called the **salutation**, which should be followed by a comma. Closings in personal and business letters also utilize commas.

Salutations/Greetings

Dear Luca,

Dear Professor Gates,

Closings

Best wishes,

Sincerely,

Writing Environment: Professional

When composing a business letter, the salutation ends with a colon rather than a comma.

Research and Development:

Mrs. Henderson:

Coordinate Adjectives

Coordinate adjectives, which are two adjectives of equal value that modify the same word, are separated by a comma. You can use two methods to determine whether or not two adjectives are coordinate.

- Can you reverse the order of the adjectives without changing the meaning?

The **slimy, odorous** mud filled the low-lying neighborhoods in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

The **odorous, slimy** mud filled the low-lying neighborhoods in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

- Can you insert the coordinating conjunction *and* between the two adjectives?

The **slimy, odorous** mud filled the low-lying neighborhoods of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

The **slimy and odorous** mud filled the low-lying neighborhoods in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Miscellaneous Uses

Numbers

| Facebook had 1,500,000,000 active users in 2016.

Dates

| On Tuesday, July 4, we will meet in Orlando for the family reunion.

Names and Titles

| John Barrett, PhD, received his degree from Oxford University.

Locations and Addresses

| Seattle, Washington, was rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1899, leaving remnants of the original city underground.

Avoiding Unnecessary Commas

Using commas incorrectly can alter your message and confuse your reader. Study these situations that use unnecessary commas so that you can avoid mistakes.

Lists with Two Items

A list must include at least three items to qualify as a series. A list with only two items does not qualify as a series, so a comma is not necessary.

Incorrect

| Many college students survive on a diet of carry-out pizza, and Chinese noodle cups.

Clauses with Relative Pronouns

Clauses starting with the relative pronoun *that* should not be set off by a comma because the information is essential to the sentence.

Incorrect

| I dislike pets, that are not housebroken.

Concluding Dependent Clauses

If a sentence concludes with a dependent clause, no comma is needed to separate the clauses.

Incorrect

| Ella and Carson decided to go on a road trip, since they had Monday off.

On Your Own

Identify the sentence with a comma error.

- If you own a smart phone, downloading a weather alert app would be a wise investment in your safety.
- Jessie's plans for the weekend include binge watching *Downton Abbey*, and cleaning out her closet.
- Antique stores are filled with books, furniture, and trinkets.

Writing Environment: Everyday

Have you ever come across a punctuation mistake while reading a novel, magazine, or online article? How did it change your opinion of the author's credibility? Imagine you're reading a wildlife conservation article about baby seals and come across the following sentence:

| Stop clubbing, seals.

This sentence seems to reference seals dancing at a nightclub. Even if you realize that it's a comma error, you've already been distracted from the article's message.

Now consider the sentence without the comma error:

| Stop clubbing seals.

This sentence accurately states the intended message (stop killing seals) and does not have a distracting comma error.

Lesson Wrap-up

Key Terms

Adjective: a word that describes a noun or pronoun

Comma: a punctuation mark used to separate items in a list; join compound sentences; mark introductory words, phrases, and clauses; add extra or unnecessary details to a sentence; and separate similar adjectives

Comma Splice: a sentence error made when two independent clauses are combined with a comma but no conjunction

Compound Sentence: two independent clauses joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction

Coordinate Adjectives: two adjectives of equal value that modify the same word

Coordinating Conjunction: a conjunction that joins similar words or a group of words together

Dependent Clause: a group of words with a subject and a verb that does not express a complete thought

Independent Clause: a group of words with a subject and a verb that expresses a complete thought

Quote: using the exact words from a source

Relative Pronoun: a pronoun used to introduce a dependent clause

Salutation: a phrase that greets the person or group receiving a letter

Signal Phrase: a phrase used to identify source information