



Grammar Bootcamp



The Basics


Sentence fragments, comma splices,
fused sentences, oh my!



The Basics

Preparation

Remember to have your writing materials handy.





Sentence Fragments






Sentence Fragments

What is a fragment?

Sentence fragments are sentences that are missing necessary elements.

Sentence fragments are **not** complete thoughts.





Sentence Fragments

Clauses

There are two types of **clauses** that we use to form sentences—**independent** and **dependent**.

Independent clause: An independent clause expresses a **complete thought** and can stand alone as a sentence.

Example

Nate wears sunglasses at night.





Sentence Fragments

Independent Clauses

In order to be considered “complete,” an independent clause must contain a **subject** and a **predicate**.

Subject: a noun or pronoun that is being described or that is completing an action

Predicate: The part of the sentence that contains the verb

Nate wears sunglasses at night.





Sentence
Fragments

Independent Clauses

Examples:

John takes his work seriously.

Subject = John

Predicate = takes his work seriously.

The road was slick and dangerous.

Subject = *the road*

Predicate = was slick and dangerous.





Sentence
Fragments

Independent Clauses

Examples:

The customer always comes first.

Subject: *The customer*

Predicate: *always comes first*

The show must go on.

Subject: *The show*

Predicate: *must go on*






Sentence Fragments

Practice

Write an independent clause containing a subject and a predicate.

Does your sentence contain a clear subject?
A predicate?





Sentence Fragments

Fragments

A sentence fragment occurs when a clause is **missing a subject or a predicate**. These fragments are sometimes known as **phrases**, and cannot stand alone.

Example:

Walking all the way to school. **X**

***The kids were** walking all the way to school.*





Sentence Fragments

More examples


Sally at the coffee shop. X

*Sally **works** at the coffee shop. ✓*

Falling behind on our quarterly reports. X

***We are** falling behind on our quarterly reports. ✓*

Falling behind on our quarterly reports, we sank into despair. ✓



Sentence Fragments

In this sentence,
"is" is the
complete verb.

Complete verbs

A complete sentence requires a **complete verb**: a verb that is not in –ing form or preceded by the word "to."

-ing verbs: *wanting, looking, smelling*

Example:

Catalina trying her best to keep up. **X**

*Catalina **is** trying her best to keep up.* ✓



Sentence Fragments

Complete verbs

If a verb has the word “to” before it, the verb is incomplete.

Jaime to lock up after closing time. X

*Jaime **is going** to lock up after closing time. ✓*

Without the complete verb “is going,” the sentence is a fragment.





Sentence Fragments

More examples

Goldman Sachs' stock soaring yesterday. X

*Goldman Sachs' stock **was** soaring yesterday. ✓*

Arthur to help with the numbers. X

*Arthur **wants** to help with the numbers. ✓*

Do you want Arthur to help with the numbers? ✓





Sentence Fragments

Practice

Fix the following fragment by adding a subject and a verb, as needed:

Going to come home early from work.

Answer:

***I am** going to come home early from work.*






Sentence Fragments

Complete ideas

An independent clause or complete sentence must also express a **complete thought**—a thought that makes full sense on its own.

Complete thoughts can be short or long:

- *John slept.*
 - *You win.*
 - *The exam will take place on the first day of the month, after the comprehensive review.*
- 



Sentence Fragments

Dependent clauses

A **dependent clause** is an expression that does not express a complete thought.

When we got there. **X**

Since you're not sure. **X**

While I was away. **X**

After you came back. **X**






Sentence Fragments

Dependent clause starters

Certain words and phrases can turn an independent clause (complete thought) into a dependent clause (incomplete thought). Here are a few examples:

- *Because*
 - *Although*
 - *When*
 - *After*
 - *Before*
 - *Since*
 - *While*
 - *Despite the fact that*
- 




Sentence Fragments

For example:

Pause the video, and write the following sentence on a piece of paper:

We started the training today.

Next, add one of the **dependent clause starters** to the beginning of your sentence: *because, although, when, after, before, since, while, despite the fact that*





Sentence Fragments

For example:


Your sentence should look something like this:

When we started the training today

or

Despite the fact that we started the training today

Notice how adding the dependent clause starter changed your sentence from a complete thought to an incomplete thought?





Sentence Fragments


Fixing the problem

To make the sentence complete, you need to add an **independent clause**:

Examples:

*When we started the training today, **we were surprised to see how many staff members attended.*** ✓

*Despite the fact that we started the training today, **many people still seem confused.*** ✓






Sentence Fragments

Remember

An independent clause needs a **subject** and a **predicate**, and will not have a **dependent clause starter** in front of it.

Note: When you start a sentence with a dependent clause, you **usually** put a comma **between the dependent clause and the independent clause.**





Sentence Fragments

How to Fix Fragments

Option 1: Remove the dependent clause word from the sentence

After your shift is over. **X**

Your shift is over. ✓





Sentence Fragments

How to Fix Fragments

Option 2: Add an independent clause

After your shift is over. **X**

*After your shift is over, **we should go out to lunch.*** ✓





Sentence Fragments

How to Fix Fragments

Option 3: Add a subject or a predicate as needed

Walking all the way to school. **X**

***The kids were** walking all the way to school.* ✓






Sentence Fragments

Review

Fragments are created **when a subject or a predicate is omitted**, or when **a dependent clause is introduced** by itself.

Fragments can be fixed by **adding a subject or predicate, removing the dependent clause word, or adding an independent clause.**





Comma Splices





Comma Splices

Review

Independent clause: complete thought

Dependent clause: incomplete thought

Phrase: incomplete thought that is also missing a subject or predicate

When Jared was evaluated, he was pleased with his feedback.

dependent clause

independent clause



Comma Splices

Comma splice

A comma splice occurs when there is a comma **between two independent clauses**.

A comma splice is a type of **run-on sentence**.

Example

The project budget was approved, we will begin working right away. **X**

independent clause

independent clause

Comma Splices

How to fix a comma splice

1. Change the comma to a semicolon

The project budget was approved, we will begin working right away. X

The project budget was approved; we will begin working right away. ✓




Comma Splices

How to fix a comma splice

2. Change the comma to a period

The project budget was approved, we will begin working right away. X

The project budget was approved. We will begin working right away. ✓



Comma Splices

How to fix a comma splice

3. Add a **FANBOYS conjunction**: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

The project budget was approved, we will begin working right away. X

*The project budget was approved, **so** we will begin working right away. ✓*




Comma Splices

How to fix a comma splice

4. Restructure the sentence

The project budget was approved, we will begin working right away. X

***Because** the project budget was approved, we will begin working right away. ✓*






Comma Splices

Practice

Nike's stock price is rising, should we invest now? X

Pause the video and write a correct version of the above sentence, using one of the methods on the previous slides.





Comma Splices

Practice (cont.)

Possible Answers

Nike's stock price is rising; should we invest now? ✓

Nike's stock price is rising. Should we invest now? ✓

*Nike's stock price is rising, **but** should we invest now? ✓*

Since Nike's stock price is rising, should we invest now? ✓






Comma Splices

Review

A comma splice occurs when a comma occurs between **two independent clauses**.

A comma splice is fixed by **restructuring the sentence** or by **adding a semicolon, a period, or a FANBOYS**.





Fused Sentences



Fused Sentences

Definition

A fused sentence occurs when there are two independent clauses with **no punctuation between**.

Example

Grammar is not easy to master it is nonetheless important in business. X

independent clause


independent clause



Fused Sentences

How to Fix Fused Sentences

You can fix a fused sentence the same ways that you fix a comma splice:

- Add a semicolon
 - Add a period
 - Add a comma and a FANBOYS
 - Restructure the sentence
- 



Fused Sentences


Example

Grammar is not easy to master it is nonetheless important in the business world. X

Grammar is not easy to master; it is nonetheless important in the business world. ✓

Grammar is not easy to master. It is nonetheless important in the business world. ✓

Grammar is not easy to master, but it is nonetheless important in the business world. ✓






Fused Sentences

Example

Although grammar is not easy to master, it is nonetheless important in the business world. ✓






Fused Sentences

Practice

Please see my attached resume I can be reached at (509) 555-5678. X

Pause the video and write a correct version of this sentence, using one of the strategies from the previous slides.





Fused Sentences


Practice (cont.)

Possible answers

Please see my attached resume; I can be reached at (509) 555-5678. ✓

Please see my attached resume. I can be reached at (509) 555-5678. ✓

***As you can see on** my attached resume, I can be reached at (509) 555-5678. ✓*






Fused Sentences

Review

A comma splice occurs when a comma is used between **two independent clauses**.

A fused sentence occurs when there **is no punctuation between two independent clauses**.

Both comma splices and fused sentences are fixed by **restructuring the sentence** or by **adding a semicolon, a period, or a FANBOYS**.



The slide features a light gray background with a white rectangular area in the center. The title 'Subject-Verb Agreement' is written in orange text within this white area. The slide is decorated with several circles of various sizes and colors (blue, orange, green, white) scattered around the edges.

Subject-Verb Agreement



Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and Verbs

Subject: what the sentence is about

Verb: The action completed in the sentence

Make sure that your subjects and verbs **agree**. For singular, third person subjects, add an "s" for present tense verbs.

For plural subjects, there will be no "s" for the verb.

The monkeys eat all the bananas.

*The monkey **eats** all the bananas.*





Subject-Verb Agreement

Exception

For first and second person pronouns in the present tense, don't add "s" to the verb:

*I **eat** lots of bananas.*

*You **eat** lots of bananas.*

*John **eats** lots of bananas.*





Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and Verbs

Example

The client find our service lacking. X

*The client **finds** our service lacking. ✓*

*The clients **find** our service lacking. ✓*





Subject-Verb Agreement

Examples

Abram look at the clock every five minutes.

*Abram **looks** at the clock every five minutes. ✓*

*Abram and Sheri **look** at the clock every five minutes. ✓*



Subject-Verb Agreement

Past and Future Tense

Past and future tense verbs take many forms.

eat

has eaten

ate

has been eating

will eat

had eaten

will be eating

had been eating

will have eaten

have eaten

is eating

have been eating



Subject-Verb Agreement

Practice

*Investors has noticed our high numbers this quarter. **X***

Pause the video and write a correct version of this sentence






Subject-Verb Agreement

Practice (cont.)

Possible answers:

*Investors **have** noticed our high numbers this quarter. ✓*

*The investor **has** noticed our high numbers this quarter. ✓*






Subject-Verb Agreement

Review

Verbs should occur in the same tense as the events in the sentence.

Subjects and verbs need to agree:

- Singular subjects: add "s" to the verb (except for first person pronouns)
 - Plural subjects: no "s" for verb
- 




Apostrophes



Apostrophes

Contractions

Use apostrophes in **contractions**—when two words are combined into one.


- *don't*
 - *won't*
 - *couldn't*
 - *weren't*
 - *can't*
 - *shouldn't*
- 



Apostrophes

Possessive words

Also use apostrophes to indicate possession:


- *My friend's dad*
 - *The cat's paw*
 - *Anya's portfolio*
 - *The neighbors' lawn*
- 



Apostrophes

Singular subjects

For singular subjects, put the apostrophe **before** the "s":

- *The dog's bed*
 - *Sarah's computer*
 - *My manager's desk*
- 




Apostrophes

Plural subjects

For a plural subject, put the apostrophe **after** the "s":

- *The Wilsons' boat*
- *My friends' apartment*

Also put the apostrophe after the "s" for singular subjects that end in "s":

- *James' notebook*
 - *The Morales' restaurant*
- 




Apostrophes

Irregular plural subjects

Some plural subjects do not end in "s":

- *The women's lounge*
- *The men's club*
- *The children's room*

Girls and *boys* end in "s," while *women*, *men*, and *children* do not:

- *The boys' toys*
 - *The men's cars*
- 



Apostrophes

Other instances

Use apostrophes in phrases such as

- *In two days' time*
- *In three weeks' time*

Note apostrophes that show up in business names:

- *McDonald's Corporation*
- 

Apostrophes

Other instances

Use an apostrophe after the last subject when indicating collective ownership:

- *Sarah, Julie, and Anya's apartment*

Use an apostrophe after each subject when indicating individual ownership:

- *Billy's, Bobby's, and Peter's test results were all high.*

**Thanks to The Little Seagull Handbook, 3rd edition, for pointing out this tip.*




Apostrophes

Review

Write a sentence in which you use a contraction of the words *do* and *not*.

Write another sentence where you talk about a car that belongs to a person named Janet and a dog that belongs to a person named Jules. Use an apostrophe and (if needed), add an "s" to indicate possession.






Apostrophes

Correct answers

I don't know if I will finish in time.

Janet's car seemed like a suitable place for Jules' dog to mark his territory.





Apostrophes

Review

Use apostrophes in **contractions**.

Use apostrophes to show **possession**.

If a subject is singular and does not end in "s," add an apostrophe and an "s."

If a subject is plural or ends in "s," put the apostrophe **after** the "s."

Note that some plural subjects don't end in "s."





Apostrophes

Pronouns

Don't use apostrophes for possessive pronouns:

- *yours*
- *mine*
- *ours*
- *his*
- *hers*
- *its*

But note that "it's" = it is






Apostrophes

Plural subjects

Don't use apostrophes for plural subjects **unless you are indicating possession:**


- *My sons all like to swim.*
 - *My sons' swimsuits are the same color.*
- 



Apostrophes

More examples:

Note the placement of apostrophes in the following instances:

- *The boys and girls are getting along nicely.*
 - *The boys' friends are mostly all girls.*
 - *The women's lounge is across from the kids' pool.*
- 



Apostrophes

Practice

The Wilsons car is behind the trees, next to my friends motorcycle.

I cant come over right now because Ive been working on Julies speech.

Its time for the seal to balance a ball on its nose.

Pause the video and write the above sentences out, adding apostrophes where needed.





Apostrophes

Answers

The Wilsons' car is behind the trees, next to my friend's motorcycle. ✓

I can't come over right now because I've been working on Julie's speech. ✓

It's time for the seal to balance a ball on its nose. ✓





Apostrophes

Numbers, Letters, Dates

Numbers don't need apostrophes:

- *Your coupon code has five 3s in it*

Letters **do** need apostrophes:

- *Mind your p's and q's*

Dates **do not** need apostrophes:

- 1990's **X**
 - 1990s **✓**
 - '60s
- 



Apostrophes

Practice

In the 1970s, there were three 2s in my phone number and two ps in my girlfriends name.

The 80s were a time of fashion nightmares.

Pause the video and write the above sentences out, adding apostrophes where needed.





Apostrophes

Answers

In the 1970s, there were three 2s in my phone number and two p's in my girlfriend's name. ✓

The '80s were a time of fashion nightmares. ✓





Apostrophes

Review

Use apostrophes for **possessive nouns** and **contractions**.

Do not use apostrophes for **plural nouns, plural letters, or dates** (unless indicating possession).

Use apostrophes for **plural numbers** and when **abbreviating dates**.





Vague Pronouns






Vague Pronouns

Pronouns

Pronoun: A word used in place of a noun such as *him, her, it, they, them, me, you, who, whom, or we*






Vague Pronouns

Vague Pronouns

Certain pronouns, when used often in writing, can lead to misunderstandings and lack of clarity. These pronouns are often referred to as **vague pronouns**.

Examples

- *it*
 - *this*
 - *that*
 - *those*
 - *which*
- 



Vague Pronouns

Solution 1: Replace the vague pronoun

You can avoid vague pronouns by being **specific**. For example, you can replace a vague pronoun with what it refers to.

Example

*We have been reviewing the numbers for the past few weeks. It just doesn't add up. **X***

*We have been reviewing the numbers for the past few weeks. **The numbers** just don't add up. **✓***



Vague Pronouns

The vague “which”

Here is another example in which we replace a vague pronoun with what it refers to:

Emily says you should clock out before you go to lunch, which is always a good idea. X

*Emily says you should clock out before you go to lunch. **Clocking out** is always a good idea. ✓*

*Emily says you should clock out before you go to lunch. **Going to lunch** is always a good idea. ✓*



Vague Pronouns

The vague “this”

The meeting with the president comes after the lunch with the dean. This provides a chance to show your personality. X

*The meeting with the president comes after the lunch with the dean. **The president’s meeting** provides a chance to show your personality. ✓*






Vague Pronouns

The vague “it”

Paul’s argument that many millennial workers demonstrate initiative shows that it is still an important trait in modern business. X

*Paul’s argument that many millennial workers demonstrate initiative shows that **initiative** is still an important trait in modern business. ✓*





Vague Pronouns

Solution 2: Rewrite the sentence

Sometimes, the best way to correct vague pronouns is to rewrite the sentence entirely.

Example

Some people think that punctuality means showing up right on time. This is not really what it means to me. X

*Some people think that punctuality means showing up right on time. **To me, however, punctuality means showing up early. ✓***






Vague Pronouns

Practice

Correct the vague pronoun in the following sentence:

John has been working on his portfolio and practicing his speech skills; will it make a difference?





Vague Pronouns

Suggested Answers

*John has been working on his portfolio and practicing his speech skills; will **these efforts** make a difference?*



*John has been working on his portfolio and practicing his speech skills; will **improving his portfolio** make a difference?*



*John has been working on his portfolio and practicing his speech skills; will **practicing his speech** skills make a difference?*






Vague Pronouns

Review

Pronouns are words that are used in place of nouns.

Pronouns such as *it*, *this*, *which*, *that*, and *those* are often used imprecisely in writing.

Vague pronouns can be addressed by replacing the vague pronoun with what it refers to or rewriting the sentence.





Vague Pronouns

Solution 3: Add a word

Sometimes, vague pronouns are remedied by simply adding a word to clarify what the pronoun refers to.

Example

Tyson argues that chicken nuggets are the most nutritious form of meat. This is preposterous. X

*Tyson argues that chicken nuggets are the most nutritious form of meat. This **claim** is preposterous.* ✓





Vague Pronouns

Filler words

Where possible, try to cut words like “it” and “this” to make your writing more concise. While not incorrect grammatically, using these words is often unnecessary.

It is not always wise to admit your weakness. X

Admitting your weakness is not always wise. ✓





Vague Pronouns

Practice

The investors are making their big pitch during tomorrow's board meeting. It is going to be a fiasco.

Sometimes my boss tells me to shine my shoes, but I do not agree with this.

Pause the video and write the above sentences out, clarifying vague pronouns where needed.






Vague Pronouns

Possible answers

*The investors are making their big pitch during tomorrow's board meeting. **The pitch** is going to be a fiasco. ✓*

*The investors are making their big pitch during tomorrow's board meeting. **The board meeting** is going to be a fiasco. ✓*

*The investors are making their big pitch during tomorrow's board meeting. **The pitch and the board meeting are both** going to be a fiasco. ✓*






Vague Pronouns

Review

The best way to avoid vague pronouns is to be **specific**.

Replace vague pronouns with the words they refer to, add a word, or rewrite the sentence to make vague pronouns clearer.

Cut filler words like “it” and “this” when they are not needed.





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement



Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Pronoun: A word used in place of a noun such as *him, her, it, they, them, me, you, who, whom, or we*

Antecedent: The word that the pronoun or reference word refers to

I have a cousin in Springfield who wears his pants backwards.



Antecedent



Pronoun





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement


Matching pronouns to antecedents

It's important to make sure your pronouns and your antecedents match:

Your fear and your worries can be turned into motivation. However, it can also paralyze you. X

*Your fear and your worries can be turned into motivation. However, **they** can also paralyze you.*

*Your fear and your worries can be turned into motivation. **However, these emotions** can also paralyze you. ✓*





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Avoiding sexist language

Take care not to imply gender in a discriminating way.

The senior manager should always organize his desk neatly. X

This sentence implies that all senior managers are men.

Senior managers should always organize their desks neatly. ✓





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Matching pronouns to antecedents

The employee lost their job.

*The employee lost **his** job. ✓*

*The employee lost **her** job. ✓*

All employees should wash their hands. ✓






Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Practice

Hard work and determination are important traits for the young professional. It will be the difference between success and failure.

Every student should have her own locker.

Correct the issues with pronoun-antecedent agreement in these sentences.





Pronoun-
Antecedent
Agreement

Suggested Answers

*Hard work and determination are important traits for the young professional. **They** will be the difference between success and failure.*

*Every student should have **his or her** own locker.*

*All **students** should have **their** own lockers.*






Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Review

The **antecedent** is what the pronoun refers to.

Antecedents and pronouns need to match in number.

Avoid sexist language by using *him or her* or by making the antecedent plural.






Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Other instances

Words like “both,” “all,” “many,” and “some” are treated as plural, and require plural pronouns.

Both** of the employees switched the names on **his** badge. **X

Both** of the employees switched the names on **their** badges. **✓






Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Other instances

The word “one” creates a singular subject:

One** of the supervisors noticed us during **their** rounds. **X

One** of the supervisors noticed us during **his** rounds. **✓





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement


Other instances

Words like *everybody*, *everyone*, and *each* are **singular**.

You can remember this fact by splitting the words in half: *every body*, *every one*.

Everybody who works here knows it's important to write ***their*** name on the board. ❌

Everybody who works here knows it's important to write ***his or her*** name on the board. ✅





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement


When to use “whom”

Who is a **subject** (does the action)

Whom is an **object** (receives the action)

*Manuel, **who** is my uncle, plays guitar. ✓*

*Delilah, **to whom** I am writing this letter, works at Jamba Juice. ✓*





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

When to use “whom”

Use *who* when you might say *he/she* in the sentence.

Use *whom* when you might say *him/her* in the sentence.

Who is going with me?

Whom will you choose for your date?

Do you know whom I was thinking of?

I don't know who you are.

**Thanks to Grammarly.com and Grammarbook.com for this tip.*



Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

“Which” vs. “who”

Use *who* or *whom* to refer to individuals, but not to collective groups or inanimate objects.

*Take the lab results to Peter, **who** is on the third floor.*

*The HR team, **which** is on break, will be with us shortly. ✓*


*The members of the HR team, **who** are on break, will be with us shortly. ✓*



Pronoun-
Antecedent
Agreement

“Which” vs. “who”

*The report, **which** is due tomorrow, should only take a few minutes of your time. ✓*





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Practice

Every plumber should remember to a wear a belt on his pants.

I have a nephew in Boise which is fascinated with dinosaurs.

Pause the video and write out the above sentences, correcting pronouns when needed.





Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement


Answers

*Every plumber should remember to wear a belt on **his or her** pants. ✓*

or

***All plumbers** should remember to wear belts on **their** pants. ✓*

*I have a nephew in Boise **who** is fascinated with dinosaurs. ✓*






Pronoun- Antecedent Agreement

Review

Make sure the pronoun matches the antecedent.

For antecedents such as *everyone* or *many*, determine if they refer to a single individual or a plural group.

Avoid sexist writing by using the pronouns *their* or *his or her*.





Comma Rules

Putting put the “fan” in FANBOYS



Comma Rules: FANBOYS




Comma Rules:
FANBOYS

FANBOY Conjunctions

FANBOYS stands for

For
And
Nor
But
Or
Yet
So






Comma Rules: FANBOYS

Review

Independent clause: a complete thought

Dependent clause: Incomplete thought, begins with a word such as *after* or *although*

If a dependent clause comes before an independent clause, they can be linked with a comma.



Comma Rules: FANBOYS

FANBOYS Conjunctions

When you use a FANBOYS to link two **independent clauses**, you put a comma **before** the FANBOYS:

Comma + FANBOYS

Arthur is a bit shy, and he is afraid to talk to girls.

Independent clause

Independent clause




Comma Rules:
FANBOYS

Examples:

*Put the cake in the fridge, **but** make sure it doesn't smash the meatloaf.*

*I find exercise invigorating, **and** I prefer running.*

*He was very well-spoken, **yet** he dressed like a pirate.*





Comma Rules: FANBOYS

Notice

Only put a comma before a FANBOYS conjunction if the conjunction occurs **between two independent clauses**.

Note that commas are not needed in the following instances because the FANBOYS are not between independent clauses:

I had to buy some food and paper towels.

The hour-long rehearsal seemed but an instant.






Comma Rules: FANBOYS

Practice

- 1. I will be early to the next meeting. I will be sure to dress sharply.*
- 2. There are too many people on the subway. I will take my car to work today.*

Pause the video and write out the above sentences. Then combine them using a **comma** and **FANBOYS**.






Comma Rules:
FANBOYS

Suggested Answers

I will be early to the next meeting, and I will be sure to dress sharply. ✓

There are too many people on the subway, so I will take my car to work today. ✓





Comma Rules: FANBOYS

When to not put commas

Don't put commas between a **subject** and a **verb**.

The doctor, said we would begin right away. X

Don't put commas between a **verb** and its **object**.

I'm going to mail, these invitations right away. X






Comma Rules: FANBOYS

Review

Use a comma before FANBOYS when combining independent clauses. (FANBOYS stands for *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*).

Don't use commas between a subject and a verb or a verb and its object.





Comma Rules: Lists





Comma Rules: Lists

Rule

Use commas after items in a list of three or more:

I bought tortillas, sour cream, and cheese.

Do not use commas if the list is only two things:

I bought tortillas and sour cream.





Comma Rules: Lists


More examples

I like sports, especially soccer, basketball, and golf.

We will drive through Oregon, Idaho, and Utah.

You need to loosen the screw, remove the screw, and then replace the screw.

Note that the comma goes after each item in the list, except for the last item.






Comma Rules: Lists

Practice

She will be sleeping jogging or eating.

I have to mow the grass pull the weeds and trim the hedges.

Pause the video and write out the above sentences on a piece of paper. Then add commas between the items in each list.






Comma Rules: Lists

Suggested Answers

She will be sleeping, jogging, or eating. ✓

I have to mow the grass, pull the weeds, and trim the hedges. ✓





Comma Rules: Lists

Review

Add commas between items in a list of three items or more.

Do not use commas if the list has only two things.





Comma Rules: Coordinate Adjectives





Comma Rules: Adjectives


Adjective: a word that describes another word

When using multiple adjectives to describe a word, sometimes you will put commas between them, and sometimes you won't. Note the following sentences:

*The store has a **big red** sign on the front.*

*A **frazzled, unkempt** woman wearing **fuzzy blue** slippers stood in line behind me.*

Note how some of the bolded adjectives have commas between them and some don't.



Comma Rules: Adjectives

What gives?

While the reasoning is technical, you can simplify the process by remembering the following:

If you can put the word “and” between the adjectives and it would sound right, then you need a comma. Otherwise, you don’t need one.

*The store has a **big and red** sign on the front. X*

*A **frazzled and unkempt** woman ✓
wearing **fuzzy and blue** slippers stood in line behind
me. X*



Comma Rules: Adjectives

More examples


The bride wore a stylish lace dress.

You wouldn't say *stylish **and** lace*, so no comma.

I was alarmed by the number of rude, loud, angry people at the fairgrounds.

You could say *rude **and** loud* or *loud **and** angry*, so a comma is used between each adjective.

*Thanks to the Purdue OWL for this tip





Comma Rules: Adjectives

Practice

*Sharon wrapped a **soft blue** blanket around her **tiny rosy-cheeked** baby.*

Write out the above sentences, adding commas between the **bolded adjectives** as needed.






Comma Rules: Adjectives

Solution

Sharon wrapped a soft blue blanket around her tiny, rosy-cheeked baby. ✓






Comma Rules: Adjectives

Review

Put a comma between adjectives if you could put *and* between those adjectives.





Comma Rules: Introductory Words



Comma Rules: Introductory Words

The rule

Use commas to set off introductory words or phrases such as *finally*, *additionally*, *after all*, *yes*, *no*, *therefore*, *similarly*, *eventually*, *fortunately*, *furthermore*, *meanwhile*, and *later*.

Examples

Finally, we had a chance to rest on a bench.

Meanwhile, Ahmed was busy catching hermit crabs.





Comma Rules:
Introductory Words

The rule

Before you begin, make sure to read the instructions.





Comma Rules: Introductory Words


In the middle

If the aforementioned introductory words or phrases occur in the **middle** of a sentence, put a semicolon before and a comma after.

Examples

I was losing more energy with each step; however, I managed to finish.

Chicken nuggets were on sale at Costco; therefore, I bought five bags.





Comma Rules: Introductory Words


Notice

Make sure the comma goes directly after the introductory word, unless this word is part of a longer introductory phrase:

However I, like to eat potato chips. X

However, I like to eat potato chips. ✓

Fortunately for me, there were other Trekkies at the convention. ✓






Comma Rules: Introductory Words

Practice

Write a sentence that begins with one of the following words. Put a comma after the introductory word or phrase:

finally, additionally, after all, therefore, similarly, eventually, fortunately, meanwhile, later

Then, write a sentence comprised of two independent clauses and an introductory word **between** the two clauses. Put a **semicolon before** the introductory word and a **comma after**.





Comma Rules: Introductory Words


Checking your answer


Your first sentence should follow this general pattern:

Eventually, Billy had enough money to buy a guitar.


Your second sentence should follow this general pattern:

I lost all of my baseball cards; fortunately, they were easy to replace.





Comma Rules: Quotations and Direct Address






Comma Rules: Introductory Words

Review

For introductory phrases such as *however*, *in addition*, and *furthermore*, put the comma after the word or phrase.

Introductory phrases can also be used in the **middle** of the sentence—in this case, put a semicolon before the introductory phrase.





Comma Rules: Introductory Words


Quotations

Commas are used after introductory phrases that come before quotations.

John said, "Is that really where you want to sit?"

According to Mikey, "Life Cereal is delicious."

Notice that the first word in a quotation generally starts with a capital letter.






Comma Rules: Introductory Words

Quotations

Commas are never used after the word *that*, even if *that* comes before a quotation:

Joan said that "[w]e should get our products somewhere else."

Notice in the example above that if a quotation begins with a capital letter and is preceded by the word *that*, you would use brackets and put a lower-case letter at the beginning of the quotation.





Comma Rules: Introductory Words

Practice

Choose one of the phrases below, write it out, and follow it up with a quotation of your own making:

People say

My mom says

Julie said that





Comma Rules: Introductory Words

Examples

People say, "You get what you pay for." ✓

My mom says, "Wash behind your ears." ✓

Julie said that "[t]he best kinds of friends are the ones who stick around in hard times." ✓





Comma Rules: Introductory Words

Addressing people directly

Use a comma after someone's name when addressing them directly within a sentence:

Bill, will you pass the salt?

Dad, are you pulling my leg?

Judge Judy, what do you rule?





Comma Rules: Introductory Words


Addressing people directly

If writing a business letter, use a colon instead of a comma when addressing your audience directly at the beginning of the letter:

Dear Mr. Phelps:

After the initial greeting, use commas.

Mr. Phelps, I'm sure you have much to do.





Comma Rules: Introductory Words


Review


Put commas after introductory phrases, including words and phrases that introduce quotations.

If an introductory word occurs in the middle of a sentence, put a semicolon before and a comma after.

Don't put commas after the word *that*.

Use commas after names when addressing someone directly in a sentence, but not at the beginning of a business letter. Use a colon at the beginning of a business letter.





Comma Rules: Dependent Clauses





Comma Rules: Dependent Clauses

Dependent Clauses

Put a comma between a dependent clause and an independent clause **if the dependent clause comes first.**

Example

Because you were early, we will get a good seat.

Since you've been away, I've been all mixed up.





Comma Rules: Dependent Clauses

Dependent Clauses

If the independent clause comes first and is followed by a dependent clause, you don't usually need a comma in between.

Example

We will get a good seat because you were early.

Could you check these numbers while you're waiting?





Comma Rules: Dependent Clauses

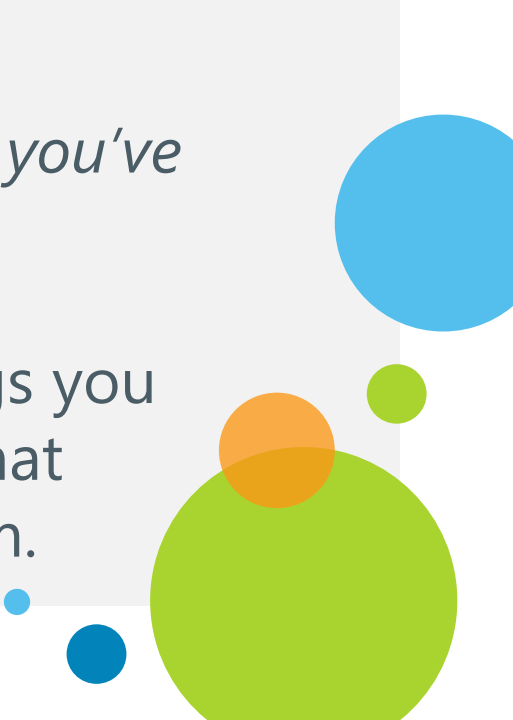
Exceptions

Sometimes, a comma is used for the sake of clarity:

You should know a few things about Zack, since you've been going out with him.

You should know a few things about Zack since you've been going out with him.

The comma helps us understand that the things you need to know about Zack are not just things that happened since you started going out with him.






Comma Rules: Dependent Clauses

Review

Put a comma after the dependent clause if a sentence begins with the dependent clause.

We don't usually need a comma after an independent clause if the independent clause comes before a dependent clause.






Comma Rules: Dependent Clauses

Practice

Write a sentence that begins with a **dependent clause**. Dependent clauses often start with words such as *while, because, since, after, although, before, when, or during*.

After the dependent clause, put a comma and write an **independent clause**.

After writing your sentence, write the sentence again with the independent clause first.





Comma Rules: Dependent Clauses

Checking your answers


The first sentence should follow this general pattern:

Since I was in the neighborhood, I decided to stop by. ✓


The second sentence should follow this general pattern:

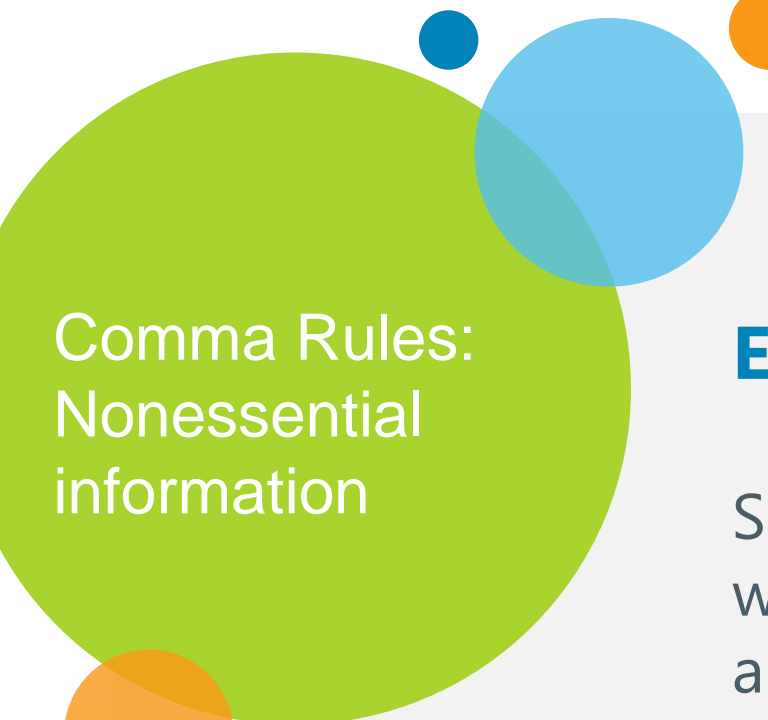
I decided to stop by since I was in the neighborhood. ✓





Comma Rules: Nonessential Information





Comma Rules: Nonessential information


Essential vs. nonessential information

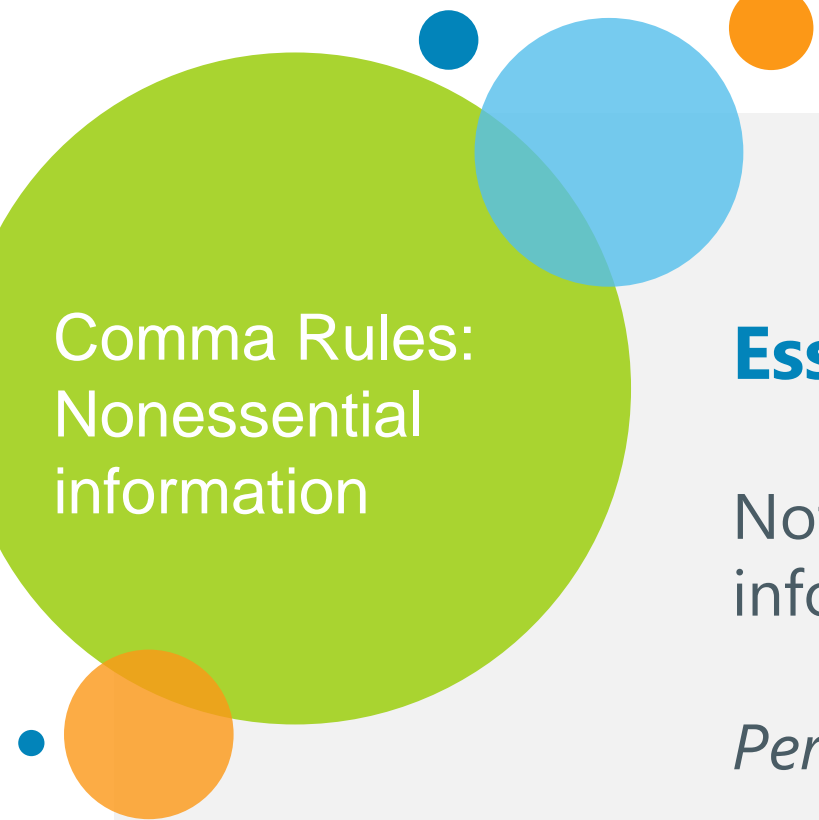
Sometimes within a sentence, we include information which clarifies or provides details, but is not absolutely essential for the sentence to make sense.

Example

Percy, who is very particular about germs, washes his hands once every hour.

In this sentence, the phrase *who is very particular about germs* is nonessential information.





Comma Rules: Nonessential information

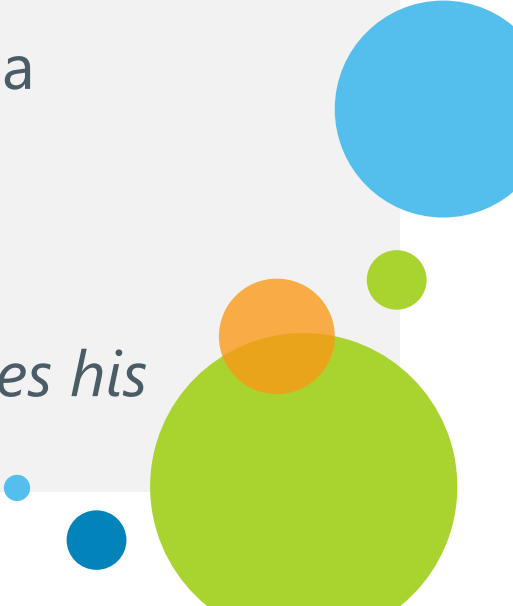
Essential vs. nonessential information

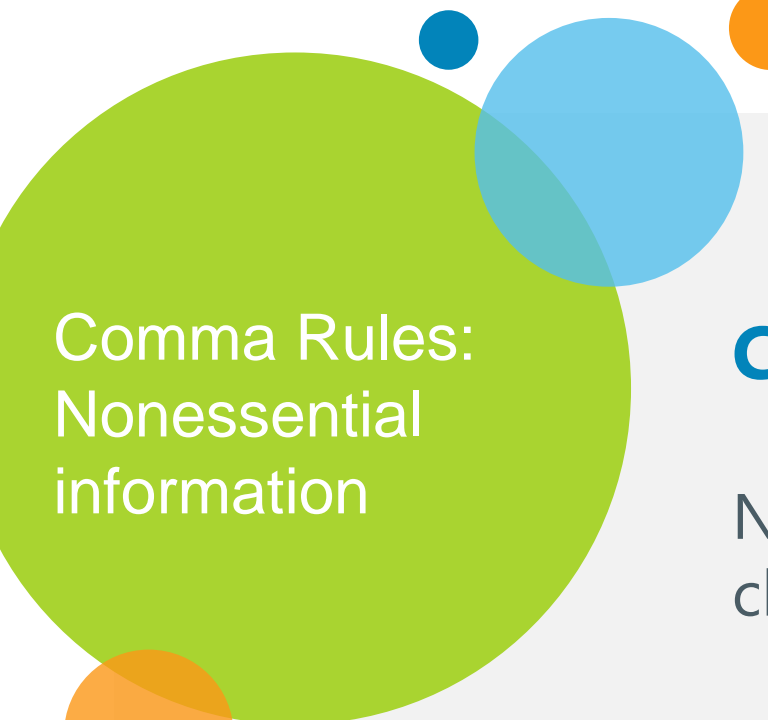
Notice how you could cut the nonessential information and the sentence would still make sense:

Percy washes his hands once every hour.

When you include nonessential information in a sentence, put a comma on both sides of the nonessential information:

Percy, who is very particular about germs, washes his hands once every hour.





Comma Rules:
Nonessential
information

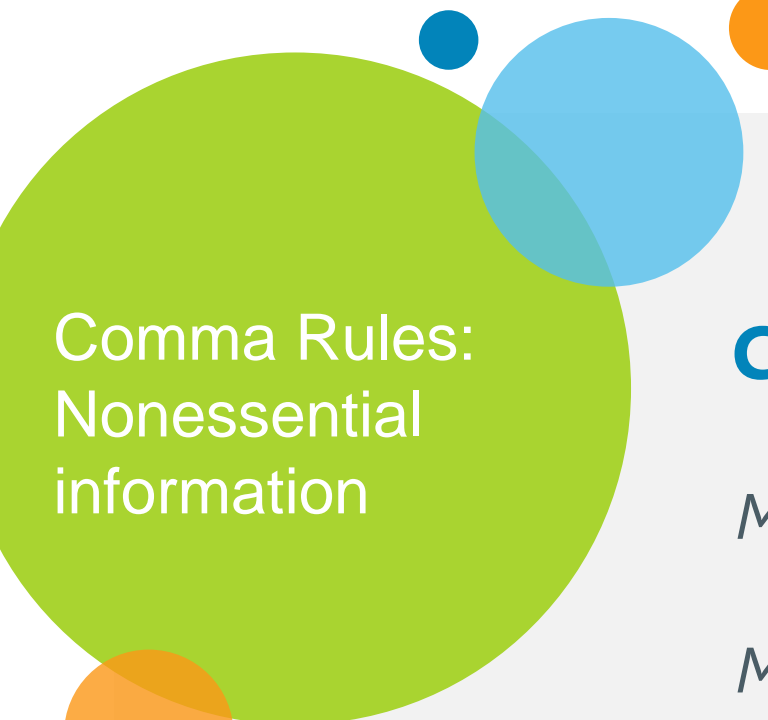
Changing the meaning

Notice that including commas and omitting commas changes the meaning of the sentence:

My brother, who lives in Chicago, is a vegetarian.

My brother who lives in Chicago is a vegetarian.





Comma Rules:
Nonessential
information

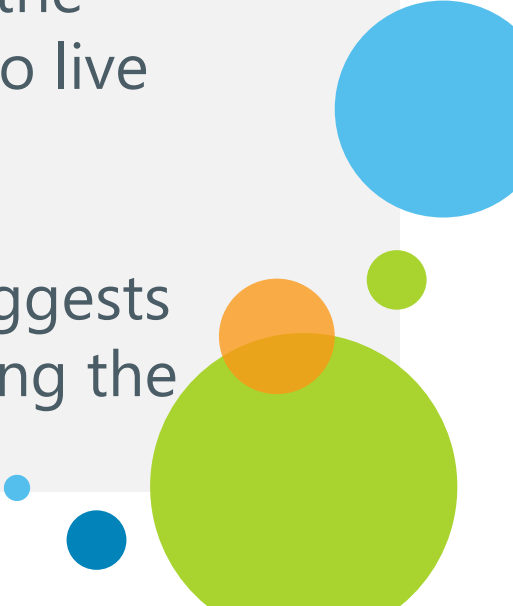
Changing the meaning

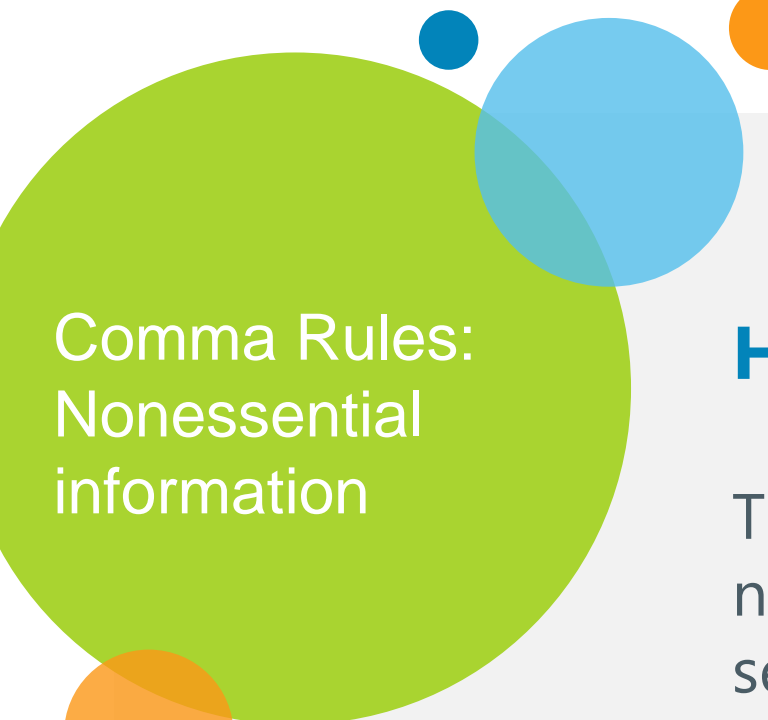
My brother, ~~who lives in Chicago,~~ is a vegetarian.

My brother who lives in Chicago is a vegetarian.

In the first example, the commas suggest that the speaker **only has one brother**, who happens to live in Chicago.

In the second example, the lack of commas suggests that **the speaker has multiple brothers**, making the phrase *lives in Chicago* essential.





Comma Rules: Nonessential information


How to tell if it's essential

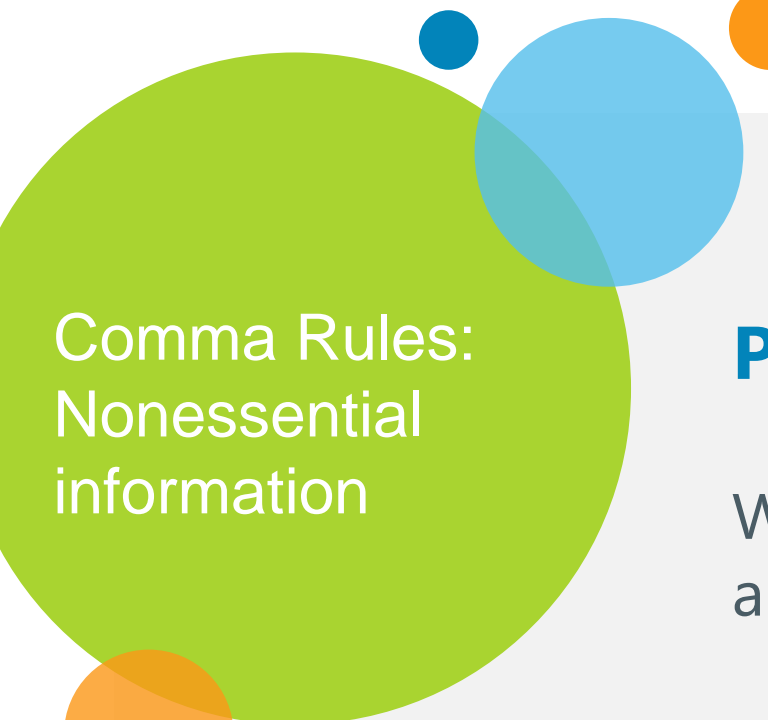
To determine whether information is essential or nonessential, try eliminating it from the sentence and see if the sentence still makes sense:

All employees ~~who don't follow procedures~~ will be fired.

All employees will be fired.

Notice how these sentences have drastically different meanings. Therefore, *who fail to follow procedures* is essential information.





Comma Rules:
Nonessential
information

Practice

Write out the following sentences and add commas around the nonessential information:

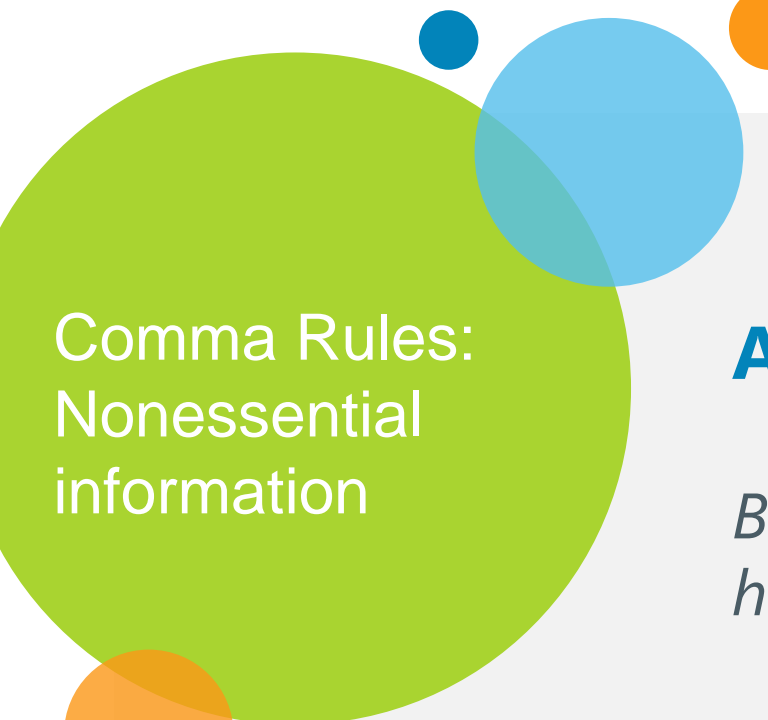
Buddy who is a telemarketer likes to tell stories about his work.

Lisa therefore will not be able to attend your party.

I Love Lucy which is your favorite show is on tonight.

The dress that you gave me is my favorite one.





Comma Rules:
Nonessential
information

Answers

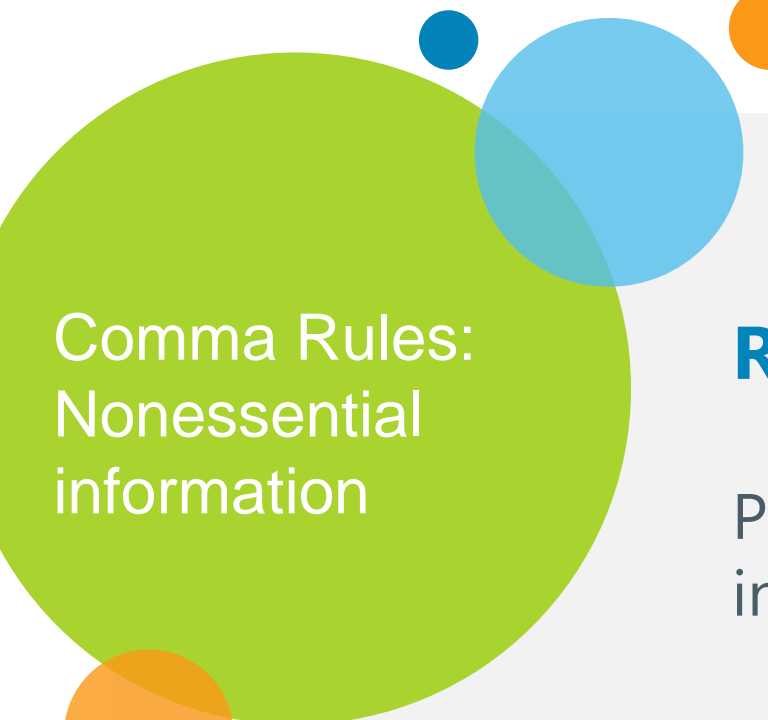
Buddy, who is a telemarketer, likes to tell stories about his work. ✓

Lisa, therefore, will not be able to attend your party. ✓

I Love Lucy, which is your favorite show, is on tonight. ✓

The dress that you gave me is my favorite one. ✓





Comma Rules: Nonessential information

Review

Put commas before and after nonessential information.

To tell if information is essential or not, try eliminating it from the sentence and seeing if the sentence conveys the same meaning.

Do not put commas before or after the word *that*.





Comma Rules: Follow-up Phrases



Comma Rules: Follow-up Phrase

Follow-up phrases

Use commas to separate follow-up phrases such as *in my opinion*, *after all*, *therefore*, *apparently*, *in retrospect*, and *regrettably* when they end a sentence:

Example

We should not purchase this version, in my opinion.

It was your idea, after all.






Comma Rules: Follow-up Phrase

Practice

Pause the video and write a sentence that ends with one of these phrases: *in my opinion*, *after all*, *therefore*, *obviously*, *apparently*, *in retrospect*, or *regrettably*.

Put a comma between the follow-up phrase and the rest of the sentence.





Comma Rules:
Follow-up Phrase

Checking your answer

Your sentence should follow this general pattern:

I will be taking my own car, therefore.






Comma Rules: Follow-up Phrase


Review


Use a comma before follow-up phrases.





Comma Rules:
Dates, Addresses,
Locations, Titles





Comma Rules:
Dates, Addresses,
Locations, Titles

Commas in dates


Put a comma after the day and the year:

Example

I started working here on June 1, 2017, and have loved every minute.

The Civil War, which ended on or around May 13, 1865, was a major event in American history.





Comma Rules:
Dates, Addresses,
Locations, Titles

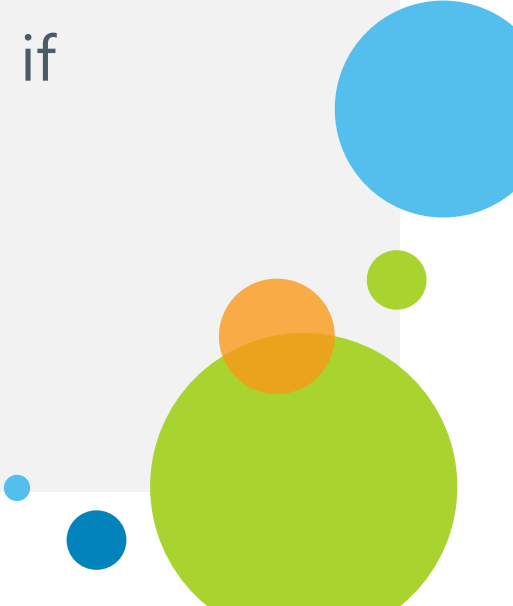
Commas in locations


Put a comma after the city and the state when identifying both.

Seattle, Washington, is a rainy place.

Don't use commas between state and zip code if writing a full address.

*John Doe
900 Center St
Fredericksburg, VA 22406*





Comma Rules:
Dates, Addresses,
Locations, Titles


Commas in Titles

Put a comma before and after professional titles.

Example

Charles Lu, PhD, will be the master of ceremonies.






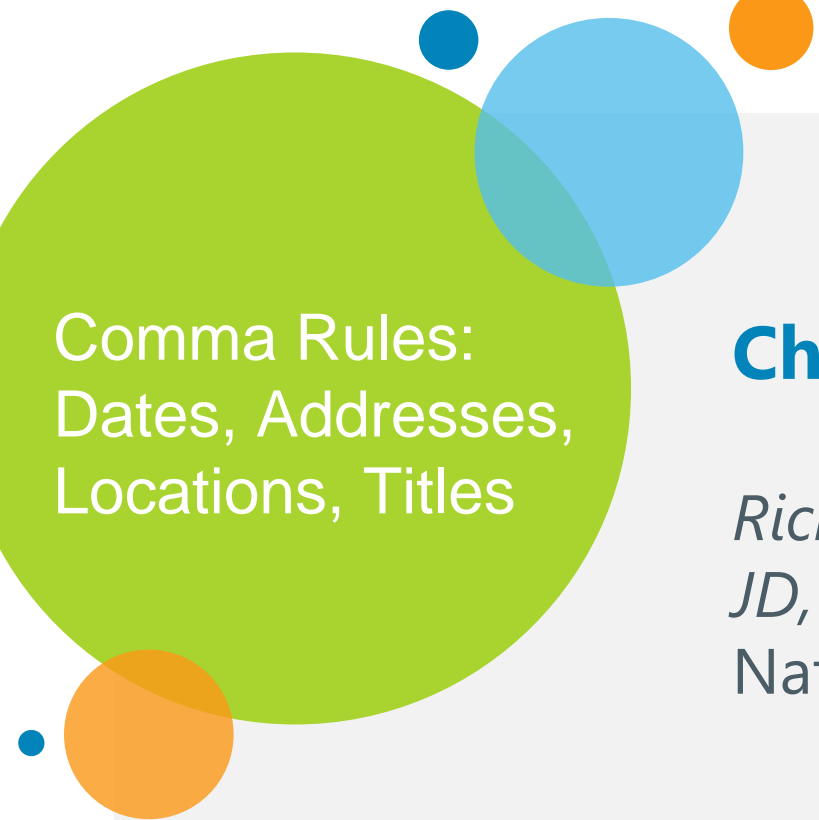
Comma Rules:
Dates, Addresses,
Locations, Titles

Practice

Pause the video and write out the following sentence, adding commas where needed:

Richfield Kentucky which is the home of Tyson Jones JD was first mentioned in national newspapers on July 2 1902 in The National Gazette.






Comma Rules:
Dates, Addresses,
Locations, Titles

Checking your answer

Richfield, Kentucky, which is the home of Tyson Jones, JD, was first mentioned on July 2, 1902, in The National Gazette.





Advanced Grammar Tips

Taking your skills to the ninja level



Misplaced Modifiers



Misplaced Modifiers

Modifiers

Modifiers are essentially phrases that refer to other parts in a sentence and provide additional meaning.

For example, consider this sentence:

The mayor unveiled exciting plans for the city to the public at the press conference.

In this sentence, *for the city, at the press conference* and *to the public* are modifiers.





Misplaced Modifiers

Modifiers

Misplaced modifiers can make a sentence confusing:

The mayor unveiled exciting plans for the city to the public at the press conference.

Notice how moving the modifier helps the sentence make more sense:

At the press conference, the mayor unveiled exciting plans for the city to the public.





Misplaced Modifiers

Other examples

Parents when attending the pool should always watch their children carefully. ❌

When attending the pool, parents should always watch their children carefully. ✅

We talked about putting all our courses online before the supervisor came in. ❌

Before the supervisor came in, we talked about putting all our courses online. ✅





Misplaced Modifiers


Single words

This principle applies to single words as well:

The investors are going to hopefully notice our progress this week. X

Hopefully, the investors are going to notice our progress this week.

I hope the investors are going to notice our progress this week. ✓





Misplaced Modifiers

Practice

Pause the video and write the following sentence out. Then correct the sentence so the bolded misplaced modifier is in a better position.

*The candidates all demonstrated excellent characteristics **for the most recent job posting.***





Misplaced
Modifiers

Checking your answer

The candidates for the most recent job posting all demonstrated excellent characteristics. ✓






Misplaced Modifiers

Review

Try to place modifiers close to the the words they are modifying.





Dangling Modifiers



Dangling Modifiers

Dangling Modifiers

A **dangling modifier** sometimes occurs when the subject of a sentence is not clearly made known:

Being very angry, the principal replied calmly and professionally to the parents' concerns. X

Although the parents were very angry, the principal replied calmly and professionally to their concerns. ✓






Dangling Modifiers

Practice

About to miss the deadline, my printer and computer both stopped working.

Pause the video and write out the following sentence. Then rewrite it, correcting the dangling modifier. Remember that modifiers are best fixed by adding a clear **subject**.






Dangling Modifiers

Checking your answer

***I was** about to miss the deadline, **and** my printer and computer both stopped working. ✓*

***As I** was about to miss the deadline, my printer and computer both stopped working. ✓*






Dangling Modifiers

Review

Avoid dangling and misplaced modifiers by putting the modifier next to what it refers to and always making sure there is a clear subject in your sentence.





Proper Nouns




Proper Nouns

Proper nouns are specific names of people, places, brands, and other things. These always start with a capital letter:

Mr. Bradshaw, Bruno Mars, Abraham Lincoln, Birmingham, McChicken Sandwich, Ferrari

Common nouns are general, everyday things, and are generally lower-case:

boss, celebrity, president, city, mouth rinse, sandwich, paper towels, car





Proper Nouns

When to capitalize

Capitalize proper nouns, but do not capitalize common nouns.

I always drive my Car carefully when I am in the City. X

I always drive my car carefully when I am in the city. ✓

I always drive my Cadillac carefully when I am in Seattle. ✓





Proper Nouns

When referring to people

Capitalize position titles when when they occur in conjunction with the person's name, but not when referring to them without the name:

The judge says that he will uphold justice.

Judge Li says that he will uphold justice.

Carlos Brown will be the judge at the hearing.





Proper Nouns

Family members

Capitalize words like *mom*, *dad*, and *grandma* when referring to these people directly.

Well, Mom, you always know the right thing to say.

My mom always knows the right thing to say.

My grandma is almost ninety.

My Grandma Jane is almost ninety.





Proper Nouns

Subjects

Don't capitalize school subjects unless you are referring to a specific course or referring to a language:

math

business

Math 108

English



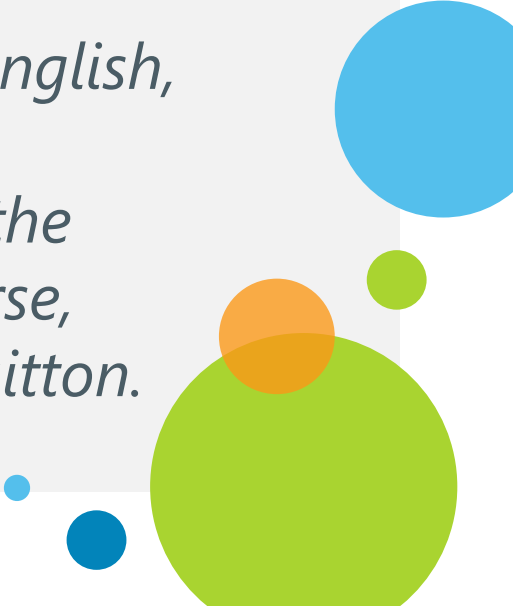


Proper Nouns

Practice

Pause the video and write out the following sentences. Then, correct the sentences so the proper nouns are capitalized and the common nouns are not.

ms. olson, the committee chair, speaks broken english, drives a dodge stratus, and donates to various charities, including the american red cross and the make a wish foundation. she never carries a purse, except for the one time i saw her with a louis vuitton.





Proper Nouns

Checking your answer

Ms. Olson, the committee chair, speaks broken English, drives a Dodge Stratus, and donates to various charities, including the American Red Cross and the Make a Wish Foundation. She never carries a purse, except for the one time I saw her with a Louis Vuitton.





Proper Nouns


Review

Capitalize the first letters of **proper nouns**: specific brand names, people, places, and products.

Don't capitalize the first letters of **common nouns**.

Capitalize position titles and family names **only if they are used in conjunction with the person's name**.

Don't capitalize school subjects unless referring to a specific course name or a language course.





Confused Words



Confused Words

Their, they're, and there

We often mix up these words unconsciously. Always double check them:

Their- possessive pronoun
Their dog is always barking at night.

They're- contraction meaning *they are*
They're always at the top of their game.

There- indicates location
Could you tell me if Sally is still over there?





Confused Words

Its and it's

Its- a possessive pronoun

The bird found its favorite perch.

It's- a contraction of *it is*

It's a shame we couldn't get here sooner.





Confused Words

Lose and loose

Lose- when you misplace something or don't win
All I do is lose, lose, lose, no matter what.

Loose- the opposite of tight
The lug nuts on the tire were loose.





Confused Words

Whose and who's

Whose- a possessive pronoun

The woman whose purse this is probably misses it.

Who's- A contraction of *who is*

Who's coming to the party tonight?





Confused Words

Good and well

Good- Indicates whether something/someone is appealing, of good quality, or of solid character

Mayor Wells is a good woman.

This is a good pair of shoes.

That pizza smells good.

Good is an adjective (describes a noun).

Well- A state of health; also used to describe verbs

Are you feeling well?

You handle pressure well.

Well is an adverb (describes a verb)





Confused Words

Bad and badly

Bad- unappealing, evil, wrong, rebellious, or of poor quality; adjective

I feel bad when I wear black leather.

I feel bad for hurting you.

He is a bad, bad man.

Badly- Describes a verb; adverb

The actor performs badly when he is sleep deprived.

My eyes see badly without glasses.

This shirt looks bad on me.





Confused Words

Affect and effect

Affect- verb form

How will the new employee affect our dynamic?

Effect- noun form

The effect on our team dynamic was positive.






Confused Words

Practice

There/their/they're the number one team in the district, and I heard they played good/well on Thursday; we might loose/lose this match if we play bad/badly.

Its/it's not clear yet whether the speaker is coming here and what effect/affect her speech will have on the team.

Pause the video and write out the sentences, using the correct words.






Confused Words

Checking your answers

They're the number one team in the district, and I heard they played well on Thursday; we might lose this match if we play badly.

It's not clear yet whether the speaker is coming here and what effect her speech will have on the team.





Confused Prepositions





Confused Prepositions

Prepositions are words that generally describe **where** or **when** something occurs.

Examples

In

For

To

During

On

Below

At

Above

Around

Outside






Confused Prepositions

Confused prepositions: *On*

Try not to use the preposition *on* unless you are referring to something on top of something else, or if you are *on a subject*.

Learning this skill will benefit my career on becoming a secret agent. X

Learning this skill will benefit me in my career as a secret agent. ✓





Confused Prepositions

In which

Only use *in which* if something is **inside** something else.

The topic in which I will be discussing is gender identity. X

*The topic **which** I will be discussing is gender identity.*






Confused Prepositions

In which

The brand in which I prefer is Tide. ❌

*The brand **which** I prefer is Tide. ✔️*

*The grammar quiz, **in which** you will find several tricky questions, is at the end of the lesson. ✔️*





Confused Prepositions

Other confused prepositions: *for, of, to*

Avoid using the prepositions *for, to,* and *of* in the wrong places, as in the following examples:

I found the reason of why he didn't come. X

*I found the reason **for** why he didn't come. ✓*

The marked envelopes were sent for your office. X

*The marked envelopes were sent **to** your office. ✓*





Confused Prepositions

Practice

Write out the following sentence. Which of the bolded prepositions need changing?

*The reason **in which** he gave **on** why you should be promoted is expressed **from** this memo.*





Confused Prepositions

Checking your answer

*The reason **which** he gave **for** why you should be promoted is expressed **in** this memo. ✓*





Other Punctuation Marks





Other Punctuation Marks


Colons

Use colons to introduce a list, but not directly after the verb:

You should bring: a shovel, gloves, and a rake. ❌

You should bring the following: a shovel, gloves, and a rake. ✅

You can also write the sentence without the colon:
You should bring a shovel, gloves, and a rake. ✅





Other Punctuation Marks

Dashes

Use hyphens to combine words and hyphenated names:

Try keep the discussion fairly open-ended.

The client has a nine-year-old son.

This is a sought-after client.






Other Punctuation Marks

Dashes and Parenthesis

You can use “em” dashes (--) between independent clauses (like semicolons) or around nonessential information (like commas).

She was very brave—she even chased the bears all the way to the forest.

The spy—though she was tired—fought her way into the ammunition bunker without being caught.






Other Punctuation Marks

Dashes and Parenthesis

You can also use **parenthesis** around nonessential information.

The spy—though she was tired—fought her way into the ammunition bunker without being caught.

The spy (though she was tired) fought her way into the ammunition bunker without being caught.





Other Punctuation Marks


Titles of Works

Use italics for titles of longer works, such as books, movies, newspapers, plays, albums, anthologies, and TV shows.

The New York Times ran a piece about *Thor: Ragnarok* and about *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

Use quotation marks for titles of shorter works: articles, essays, chapters, episodes, songs.

The article "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" reminded me of the Weird Al song "All About the Pentiums."



References

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