

Compound Sentences – You may use a comma with a coordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses that are closely related. You may use a semicolon without a coordinating conjunction.

Good Examples:

1. You may use a comma with a coordinating conjunction to join two simple sentences, or you may use a semicolon instead of a comma.
2. You may use a comma with a coordinating conjunction to join two simple sentences; otherwise, you may use a semicolon.

Complex Sentences – When you have an independent clause and a dependent clause, you need a comma if the dependent clause comes first.

Good Examples:

1. If the dependent clause comes first, you need a comma.
2. You do not need a comma if the dependent clause comes second.

Appositives and Appositive Phrases – Use commas to separate words or a phrase added after a noun that modifies or adds further information about it.

Good Examples:

1. Appositive phrases, used to add additional information about a noun, need to be separated from the rest of the sentence with commas.
2. Words used to modify a subject or add meaning to it, or appositives, need to be set off with commas.

“And” is not always preceded by a comma.

- If the word “and” is used to join two nouns or other words into a group, then a comma is not needed.

A Good Example:

Commas are often used with conjunctions and with series.

- If the word “and” is used as part of a compound subject or predicate, then a comma is not needed.

A Good Example:

Misplaced commas and semicolons can be confusing to writers and readers.

Run-on Sentences – Joining two or more independent clauses (simple sentences) without proper punctuation or a coordinating conjunction is a run-on sentence.

A Bad Example:

This is not a sentence it is a run-on. (Needs either a semicolon or both a comma and a coordinating conjunction after “sentence.”)

(***Coordinating conjunctions include the following: *For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So*. You can remember this by using the acronym, “FANBOYS.”

Comma Splices – Joining two (or more) sentences or phrases with just a comma is a comma splice. Essentially, it is a run-on with a comma.

A Bad Example:

This is not a sentence, it is a comma splice. (Needs a coordinating conjunction after the comma.)

Sentence Fragment – A group of words that is not an independent clause because it is missing either a subject or predicate or is not a complete thought is a sentence fragment.

A Bad Example:

Using complete sentences is important. Just like using proper spelling.

Introductory words or phrases – Words or phrases at the start of the sentence that add context or connect ideas but are not part of the main point of the sentence are set off with a comma.

Good Examples:

1. Simply stated, this sentence has an introductory phrase that needs a comma.
2. Additionally, this sentence has an introductory phrase.

Using “because” at the beginning of a sentence – Using “because” at the beginning of a clause makes it dependent since the clause no longer expresses a complete thought. A dependent clause needs to be connected to an independent clause to make a complete thought.

A Good Example:

Because the dependent clause comes first, it is okay to start this sentence with “because.”

A Bad Example:

Because this is not a complete thought. (This leaves the reader wondering about the result.)