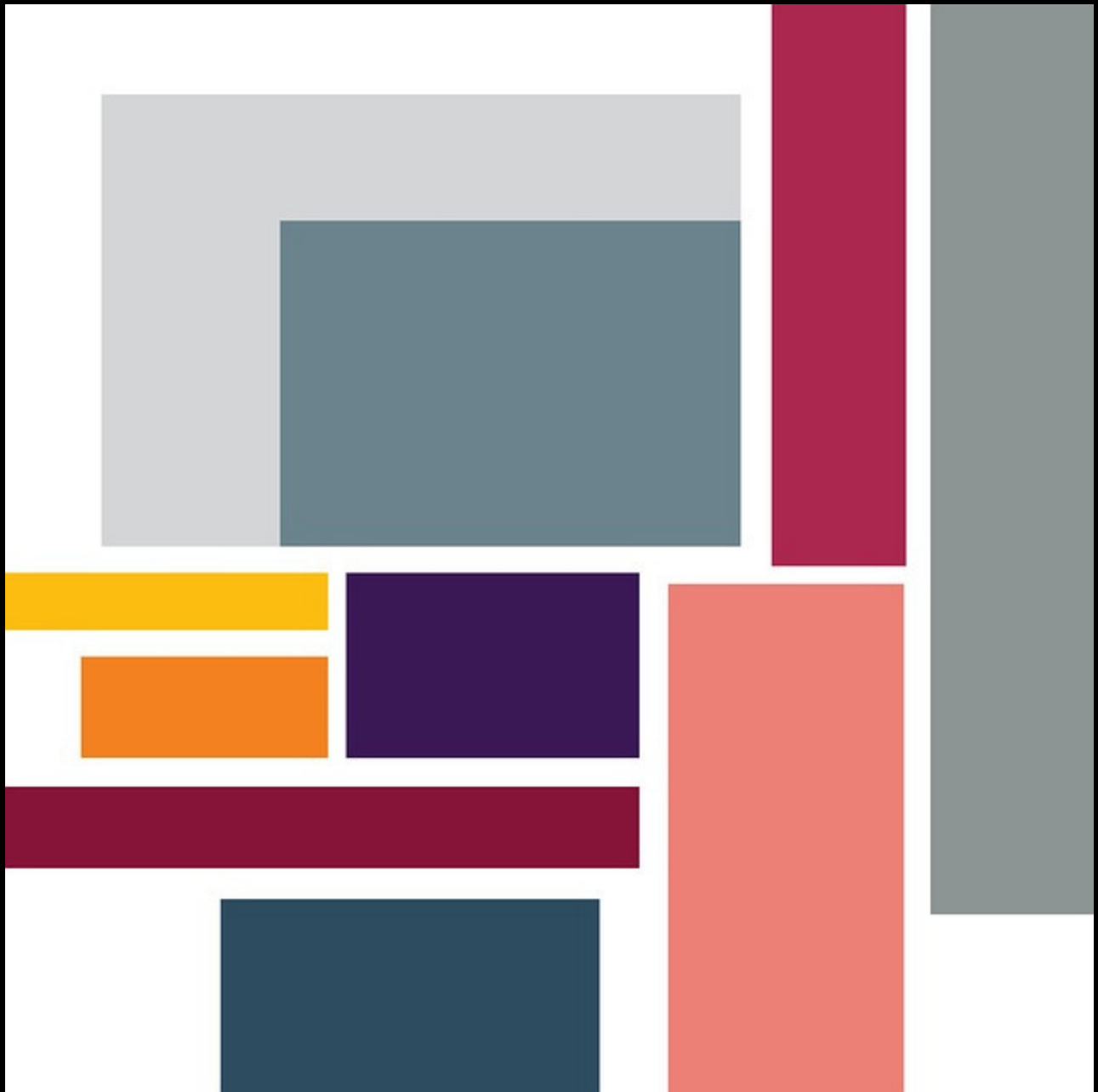


Commas



Commas are used:

A. Before a coordinating (FANBOYS) conjunction, to separate independent clauses

There are seven coordinating conjunctions, known by the acronym FANBOYS:

For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So

FANBOYS conjunctions can be used to join independent clauses (complete sentences), and they must always come after a comma when they are employed in this way.

Note that without a comma, a sentence that uses a FANBOYS conjunction to join two independent clauses is technically a run-on sentence, regardless of how short it is.

Run-on: Some animal species are able to make their own **vitamin C** **but** **people** lack the enzymes necessary to produce this compound and must obtain it through their diets.

Correct: Some animal species are able to make their own **vitamin C**, **but** **people** lack the enzymes necessary to produce this compound and must obtain it through their diets.

When the subject is the same in both clauses and is **not** repeated in the second clause, no comma is needed.

Incorrect: People lack the enzymes necessary to produce **vitamin C**, **and** **must** obtain this compound through their diets.

Correct: People lack the enzymes necessary to produce **vitamin C** **and** **must** obtain this compound through their diets.

You can also think of the rule this way: *comma + FANBOYS = period*, so plug in a period in place of *comma + and*.

Plug in: People lack the enzymes necessary to produce **vitamin C**. **Must** obtain this compound through their diets.

Clearly, *Must obtain this compound through their diets* is not a sentence, so no comma should be used.

In real life, this rule is somewhat flexible. When a sentence is very long and complex, a comma may in fact be helpful – or even necessary – for the sake of clarity and readability.

Acceptable: Unlike some animal species, human beings are born without the ability to produce the enzyme L-gulonolactone oxidase, **and** **must** obtain vitamin C through the consumption of foods such as oranges and broccoli.

B. Between a dependent phrase/clause and an independent clause

Unlike independent clauses, dependent clauses cannot stand on their own as complete thoughts.

Dependent elements may take the form of **introductory** words (typically transitions such as *in fact*, *essentially*, *moreover*, or *as a result*) or short phrases.

- Correct: **Initially**, it looked as if the storm was going to miss us by a few hundred miles.
- Correct: **The largest city in the United States**, New York City is a major cultural and financial center.
- Correct: **Rejecting a career in ballet**, Mae Jemison studied engineering and was accepted into NASA's astronaut-training program in 1987.

Dependent clauses frequently begin with **subordinating conjunctions**:

After	Before	Though	Whenever
Although	Despite	Unless	Whereas
As	If	Until	Whether
Because	Since	When	While

When a dependent clause is placed before an independent clause to form a complete sentence, a comma should separate the two clauses.

- Incorrect: Because domesticated canines do not naturally live in pack **structures** **some** scientists scoff at dog-training approaches that require humans to act as pack leaders.

Note that in this version, the two clauses blend into one another. The reader is forced to stop and think about where the division of ideas occurs. In contrast, the comma creates a clear division between the thoughts.

- Correct: Because domesticated canines do not naturally live in pack **structures**, **some** scientists scoff at dog-training approaches that require humans to act as pack leaders.

A dependent phrase or clause that appears after the main clause should typically be set off by a comma as well.

- Correct: Testing animal cognition is **tricky, especially** when species-specific tests are used.
- Correct: Jackie Robinson retired from baseball in **1957, having** become one of the most famous baseball players in the United States.
- Correct: Inuit art was traditionally based on the carving of walrus **ivory, a material** that was once found in abundance.

Note that clauses beginning with *which* should always be set off by a comma.

- Correct: In addition to sketching landscape and nature in his early years, M.C. Escher also drew **insects, which** were featured in a number of his later works.

Comma Exercise 1: FANBOYS and Dependent Elements

Punctuate the following sentences by adding commas as necessary.

1. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was originally intended for an adult audience but today it is widely read as part of the high school curriculum in the United States.
2. Because the Rosetta Stone presented the same text in all three ancient Egyptian scripts it provided the key to the modern understanding of hieroglyphs.
3. Over two million tourists visit Whistler in British Columbia each year primarily for winter sports such as snowboarding and alpine skiing.
4. The average family size in most countries has been steadily decreasing so there are fewer children overall than there used to be.
5. Initially photography's status as an art form was unclear: at the International Exhibition of 1862 organizers debated whether photographs should be shown with the machines or with the paintings.
6. Although paleontologists often find new dinosaur bones or footprints the two types of fossils have not been found together until recently.
7. Ignorance can often be propagated under the guise of balanced debate: for example the synthesis of two opposing views does not always result in a rational conclusion.
8. According to United Nations estimates more than 240 million people live in a country other than in which they were born.
9. In 1858 architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux won the commission to improve and expand Manhattan's Central Park and they began construction on it the same year.
10. The eyes of many predatory animals are designed to enhance depth perception; however they are designed to maximize the field of vision in most other organisms.

C. Around non-essential items (words, phrases, and clauses)

Commas are used to signal non-essential words, phrases, and clauses. These elements provide information that is not crucial to the meaning of a sentence – it's more like an interruption. Consequently, the information can be removed without affecting the sentence's basic grammatical structure.

Correct: Voltaire's novel *Candide*, **which was written sometime between 1757 and 1758**, was one of the most scandalous works of the eighteenth century.

Cross out: Voltaire's novel *Candide* [...] was one of the most scandalous works of the eighteenth century.

A comma must always be placed at both the beginning and the end of the non-essential information; it is incorrect to include only one comma.

Incorrect: Voltaire's novel *Candide* **which was written sometime between 1757 and 1758**, was one of the most scandalous works of the eighteenth century.

Incorrect: Voltaire's novel *Candide*, **which was written sometime between 1757 and 1758** was one of the most scandalous works of the eighteenth century.

Non-essential clauses often begin with "w-words" (relative pronouns) such as *which*, *who*, and *whose*, but they can also begin with nouns (in which case they are known as appositives) or with participles (-ing words).

Correct: The wingspan of the monarch butterfly, **a species commonly mistaken for the similar-looking viceroy butterfly**, ranges from 8.9 to 10.2 centimeters.

Correct: Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein, **having achieved success independently**, began their collaboration with the musical *Oklahoma!* in 1943.

Some transition words that typically appear at the beginning of a clause (e.g., *however*, *moreover*, *therefore*) can also be used non-essentially in the middle of a clause.

Correct: Some traditional assumptions about how to treat jellyfish stings have recently been called into question: rinsing the affected areas with seawater, **for example**, only spreads the stings to a larger area.

In addition, information that is typically used to introduce a sentence can be included non-essentially in the middle of a sentence. This is a fairly sophisticated construction, but one that is common in academic writing.

Correct: A new software called DXplain, **some hospitals report**, is helping doctors make diagnoses and avoid the types of errors that can sometimes cause harm to patients.

Tip: If you are unsure whether a statement is non-essential, cross it out and read the sentence without it. If the sentence still makes grammatical sense, the information is non-essential, and two commas must be used.

Finally, when a person is addressed directly, the name is treated as a non-essential item and set off with commas.

Incorrect: You **know Sophie your** dog is so much better trained than mine!

Incorrect: You **know, Sophie (or: know Sophie,) your** dog is so much better trained than mine!

Correct: You **know, Sophie, your** dog is so much better trained than mine!

D. Between items in a list

In any list of three or more items, serial commas are used to separate the items. Note that the comma before *and* (i.e., the “Oxford comma”) is typically optional.

Correct: The museum’s open-storage display brings over 900 vintage World’s Fair souvenirs out of attics, desk drawers, **shoeboxes, and museum** archives for visitors to view.

Correct: The museum’s open-storage display brings over 900 vintage World’s Fair souvenirs out of attics, desk drawers, **shoeboxes and museum** archives for visitors to view.

When the meaning would be ambiguous without a comma between the last two items, however, then one should be used for clarity.

Incorrect: The dairy company’s overtime rules do not apply to the processing, preserving, freezing, **packing for shipment or distribution** of perishable foods.

In the above sentence, the lack of a comma in the phrase *packing for shipment or distribution* makes it unclear whether overtime rules do not apply to two acts (the packing of perishable foods for shipment and distribution of perishable foods) or a single act (packing perishable foods for shipment and distribution). If the rules in fact refer to two separate acts, then a comma must be used for clarity.

Correct: The dairy company’s overtime rules do not apply to the processing, preserving, freezing, **packing for shipment, or distribution** of perishable foods.

Note: The example above is a modified version of a sentence that was the subject of a \$10 million lawsuit. Truck drivers argued that their employer had unfairly withheld pay, based on the ambiguous wording of their contract.

E. Between two adjectives whose order could be reversed, OR that could be separated by the word *and*

When two adjectives can be written in either order, then a comma should be placed between them.

Correct: One of the Queens Museum’s recent exhibits featured works by contemporary artists from Japan, Taiwan, and Ireland, offering patrons the chance to see a kind of **innovative, passionate** art that larger museums often ignore.

Correct: One of the Queens Museum’s recent exhibits featured works by contemporary artists from Japan, Taiwan, and Ireland, offering patrons the chance to see a kind of **passionate, innovative** art that larger museums often ignore.

Alternately, if the word *and* can be placed between the adjectives, a comma can be used in its place.

Correct: One of the Queens Museum’s recent exhibits featured works by contemporary artists from Japan, Taiwan, and Ireland, offering patrons the chance to see a kind of **innovative and passionate** art that larger museums often ignore.

However, if the first adjective modifies the second, OR if two adjectives could not normally be separated by the word *and*, no comma should be used.

Incorrect: Created in Jamaica during the late 1960s, reggae music emerged from a number of sources ranging from **traditional, African** songs and chants to contemporary jazz.

Correct: Created in Jamaica during the late 1960s, reggae music emerged from a number of sources ranging from **traditional African** songs and chants to contemporary jazz.

Comma Exercise 2: Non-Essential Elements, Lists and Adjectives

Punctuate the following sentences by adding commas as necessary.

1. The cesium fountain atomic clock the most precise form of timekeeper available is expected to become inaccurate by less than a single second over the next 50 million years.
2. Large-scale social strife economic stagnation and an exploding population all conspired to weaken the Qing Dynasty in nineteenth-century China.
3. Most modern brachiopods also known as lamp shells prefer quiet calm water; they often attach to the undersides of stones or other hard objects.
4. Forensic biology the application of biology to law enforcement has been used to identify illegal products from endangered species and investigate bird collisions with wind turbines.
5. Among the reforms introduced during Napoleon's reign were the abolition of all feudal privileges and historic taxes the introduction of legal reforms and the reorganization of local administrative systems.
6. The paintings of Caravaggio which combine a realistic observation of the human state both physical and emotional with stark dramatic lighting had a formative influence on Baroque painting.
7. New Zealand one of the last lands to be settled by humans developed fascinating distinctive forms of wildlife during its long isolation.
8. Frank Gehry's buildings critics agree are among the most striking examples of contemporary architecture found in the United States.
9. The Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh lacks both trains and a functional highway; its isolation however has helped preserved a traditional way of life.
10. Over the course of his career, photographer and filmmaker George Picker chronicled the lives of artists including folk singers jazz musicians and painters.

F. With geographic locations

A comma should be placed after a city name and around the state/province/country name.

Note that the state/province/country name effectively functions as a non-essential word or phrase.

Incorrect: The conference will be held in **Albuquerque New Mexico** in July.

Correct: The conference will be held in **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, in July.

Incorrect: Next year, we are planning to visit **Seoul South Korea** for two weeks.

Correct: Next year, we are planning to visit **Seoul, South Korea**, for two weeks.

In addresses, a comma should be placed between the street and the city, and between the city and the state/province.

Incorrect: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is located at **77, Massachusetts Avenue Cambridge MA**.

Correct: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is located at **77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA**.

However, no comma should be placed between the state and the zip code.

Incorrect: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is located at **77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, 02139**.

Correct: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is located at **77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139**.

G. With dates

Place a comma between a month/day and a year when the day follows the month.

Incorrect: My birthday is **March 18 2001**.

Correct: My birthday is **March 18, 2001**.

When the day comes before the month (European-style), no commas should be used.

Incorrect: My birthday is **18 March, 2001**.

Correct: My birthday is **18 March 2001**.

When a date appears in the middle of a sentence, the year must be surrounded by commas.

Incorrect: John Adams believed that **July 2, 1776** would be celebrated as Independence Day in the United States.

Correct: John Adams believed that **July 2, 1776**, would be celebrated as Independence Day in the United States.

H. With titles

Titles such as Jr., M.D., or Esq. should be set off by commas when they appear in the middle of a sentence.

- Incorrect: Martin Luther King, **Jr.** was actually born Michael Luther King, **Jr.** but later had his first name changed to Martin.
- Correct: Martin Luther King, **Jr.,** was actually born Michael Luther King, **Jr.,** but later had his first name changed to Martin.
- Incorrect: Beginning in 1989, Neil Patrick Harris played the title role of a child prodigy doctor in Doogie Howser, **M.D.** for which he was nominated for a Golden Globe.
- Correct: Beginning in 1989, Neil Patrick Harris played the title role of a child prodigy doctor in Doogie Howser, **M.D.,** for which he was nominated for a Golden Globe.

I. To introduce a quotation

A direct quotation should be set off by a comma.

- Incorrect: When the police ask Tom Buchanan what color car he was driving at the time of the accident, he **responds** **"It's** a blue car, a coupe."
- Correct: When the police ask Tom Buchanan what color car he was driving at the time of the accident, he **responds,** **"It's** a blue car, a coupe."
- Incorrect: The police ask Tom Buchanan what color car he was driving at the time of the accident. **"It's** a blue car, a **coupe"** he responds.
- Correct: The police ask Tom Buchanan what color car he was driving at the time of the accident. **"It's** a blue car, a **coupe,"** he responds.

However, that when a quotation is integrated into the body of a sentence rather than introduced by a "reporting" verb (e.g., *said*, *exclaimed*, *responded*), no comma is necessary.

- Incorrect: Tom Buchanan told the police officer that he was **driving,** **"a blue car, a coupe."**
- Correct: Tom Buchanan told the police officer that he was **driving** **"a blue car, a coupe."**

Note that this rule applies to quotations set off by *that*.

- Incorrect: When the police ask Tom Buchanan what color car he was driving at the time of the accident, he responds **that,** **"he** was driving a blue coupe."
- Incorrect: When the police ask Tom Buchanan what color car he was driving at the time of the accident, he responds **that,** **he** was driving a blue coupe.
- Correct: When the police ask Tom Buchanan what color car he was driving at the time of the accident, he responds **that** **"he** was driving a blue coupe."

Comma Exercise 3: Places, Dates, Titles, Quotations

Punctuate the following sentences by adding commas as necessary.

1. Emmy-winning actor André Braugher, the youngest of four children, was born July 1 1962 in Chicago Illinois the son of a postal worker and a heavy-equipment operator.
2. In one of his most famous essays, the transcendentalist philosopher Henry David Thoreau stated "This world is but a canvas to our imagination."
3. The Dina and Raphael Recanati Chair of Medicine at Harvard Medical School in Boston Massachusetts Jerome E. Groopman M.D. grew up in Queens New York and has been a staff writer in medicine and biology for *The New Yorker* since 1998.
4. The Battle of Antietam was fought on September 17 1862 between Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and Union General George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac near Sharpsburg Maryland and Antietam Creek.
5. As the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre asserted "existence precedes essence" – in other words, people do not choose to be born, but they are free to determine how to live their lives.
6. When, as an 18-year old undergraduate, the physicist Freeman Dyson asked his mathematics professor Godfrey Hardy why he was writing books instead of proving theorems, Godfrey responded "Young men should prove theorems. Old men should write books."
7. While competing at the Olympics in Beijing China the Japanese sprinter Shingo Suetsugu set a record for the 200-meter dash on August 22 2008.
8. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace, his family's home in Oxfordshire England on 30 November 1874, a time when the United Kingdom was the dominant world power.
9. Among cities in the United States, Philadelphia Pennsylvania is unique in that it holds the title of UNESCO World Heritage City – an honor that was bestowed on it on November 6 2015.
10. Based on the letters of Robert Gould Shaw, the film *Glory* premiered in limited release in the United States on December 14 1989 and in wide release on February 16 1990.

Comma Exercise 4: All Rules

Punctuate the following sentences with commas as necessary.

1. George Westinghouse one of Thomas Edison's main rivals created his first major invention the rotary steam engine before the age of twenty.
2. In *The Library: A Catalogue of Wonders* Stuart Kells writes "Libraries are an attempt to impose order in a world of chaos. They are places of redemption."
3. Used in some martial arts the Red Belt one of several colored belts intended to denote a practitioner's skill level and rank originated in Japan and Korea.
4. Although it lacks traditional circus elements like animals and clowns Cirque du Soleil continues to draw thousands of spectators around the world each year.
5. Naples known internationally for its rich colorful history has played an important political and cultural role both within and beyond the Italian peninsula since it was founded nearly 3,000 years ago.
6. The battleship Potemkin was made famous by its crew's mutiny against commanding officers a rebellion that later came to be viewed as an initial step toward the Russian Revolution that began on November 7 1917.
7. Because the city's government has curtailed spending on all non-essential services for lack of funds the new theater company has been forced to suspend several of its productions.
8. Copper a metal widely used by the ancient Greeks had great significance because of its association with Cyprus which was considered a sacred island.
9. Traditional African instruments such as the Kora the balafon and the ngoni have strongly influenced the sound of French rap music.
10. When Mr. Darcy's feelings have grown too strong to repress he approaches Elizabeth Bennet and proclaims "You must allow me to tell you how ardently I love and admire you."
11. During the 1970s the demand for long-lasting staple foods caused many manufacturers to add preservatives to previously simple dishes reducing the quality of their flavors.

12. Long after ancient warriors had ceased to use chariots in warfare ordinary citizens continued to rely on them for traveling over long distances celebrating during festivals and racing them in sporting events.
13. The Ford Model T colloquially known as the Tin Lizzie was produced by Ford Motor Company in Detroit Michigan from October 1 1908 to May 26 1927 and is generally regarded as the first affordable automobile.
14. Each year the Iditarod dog sled race takes place in Nome Alaska to commemorate the dogsled teams that delivered a lifesaving serum during the 1925 diphtheria epidemic.
15. According to the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* a magisterial six-volume compilation of myths legends and folktales collected by folklorists in the early twentieth century many cultures have told similar stories to explain the occurrence of solar eclipses.

Common Comma Misuses:

A. Between independent clauses (comma splice)

Placing a comma alone between independent clauses creates a **comma splice**. While this construction may be used very sparingly in informal writing for stylistic effect, it is always incorrect in formal academic writing.

- Incorrect: Some animal species are able to make their own **vitamin C**, **people** lack the enzymes necessary to produce this compound and must obtain it through their diets.
- Correct: Some animal species are able to make their own **vitamin C**, **but people** lack the enzymes necessary to produce this compound and must obtain it through their diets.

Note that conjunctive adverbs such as *however*, *therefore*, *consequently*, *moreover*, *nevertheless*, and *furthermore* must be placed after a period or semicolon, not a comma, when they are used to begin a clause.

- Incorrect: Some animal species are able to make their own **vitamin C**, **however**, **people** lack the enzymes necessary to produce this compound and must obtain it through their diets.
- Correct: Some animal species are able to make their own **vitamin C**. **However**, people lack the enzymes necessary to produce this compound and must obtain it through their diets.
- Correct: Some animal species are able to make their own **vitamin C**; **however**, **people** lack the enzymes necessary to produce this compound and must obtain it through their diets.

In addition, remember that a statement that begins with a pronoun such as *it*, *they*, *s/he*, or *we* can be a complete sentence, even if it does not make sense out of context.

- Incorrect: **People** lack the enzymes necessary to produce their own **vitamin C**, **they** must obtain it through their diets.
- Correct: **People** lack the enzymes necessary to produce their own **vitamin C**. **They** must obtain it through their diets.
- Correct: **People** lack the enzymes necessary to produce their own **vitamin C**; **they** must obtain it through their diets.

B. Between compound items

Compound items consist of two of the same part of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives) joined by the word *and*. When two elements are linked this way, no comma should be used.

The easiest way to apply this rule is as follows: because *comma + and* = period, replace the period with *comma + and*. If two complete sentences are not present, no comma should be used.

Compound Noun

- Incorrect: **Ada Lovelace, and Charles Babbage** were two of the most influential figures in the history of computer science and mathematics.
- Plug in: **Ada Lovelace. Charles Babbage** were two of the most influential figures in the history of computer science and mathematics.
- Correct: **Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage** were two of the most influential figures in the history of computer science and mathematics.

Compound Adjective

- Incorrect: Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage were two of the most **important, and influential** figures in the history of computer science and mathematics.
- Plug in: Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage were two of the most **important. Influential** figures in the history of computer science and mathematics.
- Correct: Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage were two of the most **important and influential** figures in the history of computer science and mathematics.

C. Between subjects and verbs

Unless a subject and verb are separated by a non-essential clause, no comma should be placed between them.

- Incorrect: Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage, **were** two of the most influential figures in the history of computer science, and mathematics.
- Correct: Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage **were** two of the most influential figures in the history of computer science and mathematics.

This rule holds true even when subjects are extremely long and complex.

- Incorrect: What is particularly remarkable about Ada Lovelace's work on Charles Babbage's "analytical engine," **is** that she foresaw many of the ways in which computers are used today.
- Correct: What is particularly remarkable about Ada Lovelace's work on Charles Babbage's "analytical engine" **is** that she foresaw many of the ways in which computers are used today.

Even though you may feel that a pause is necessary before the verb (and even though it is acceptable to use one informally in order to break up long sentences), in strict grammatical terms, no comma should be used.

D. Before or after a preposition

Prepositions are **location** and **time** words such as *of, for, from, to, in, with, by, about, between, before, and after*.

- Incorrect: Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage were two of the most influential **figures, in** (or: **figures in,**) the history of computer science and mathematics.
- Correct: Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage were two of the most influential **figures in** the history of computer science and mathematics.

The only **exception** to this rule occurs when a preposition is used immediately before or after a non-essential clause. This construction can easily become very awkward, though, and so you should generally avoid it.

- Correct: Although Ada Lovelace lived nearly a century before the first computer was built, she, **in a way that was unique among nineteenth century mathematicians**, predicted many of the modern computer's capabilities.
- Correct: As a young woman, Ada Lovelace began work on Charles Babbage's "analytical engine," generally considered the precursor to the modern computer, **at a time** when most people could hardly imagine such a machine.

E. Before or after the word *that*

- Incorrect: Parrots are one of the most difficult **pets, that** a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.
- Incorrect: Parrots are one of the most difficult **pets that,** a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.
- Correct: Parrots are one of the most difficult **pets that** a person can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.

In addition, when *that* is optional and is not used, no comma should be used in its place.

- Incorrect: Parrots are one of the most difficult **pets, a person** can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.
- Correct: Parrots are one of the most difficult **pets a person** can have because they are intelligent, demanding, and live for up to 50 years.

As is true for prepositions, the only **exception** to the “no comma after *that*” rules occurs when a non-essential clause follows *that*. In such cases, it is acceptable to place a comma afterward. However, this is another construction that can easily become awkward, and it is best avoided.

- Correct: To research her best-selling novel *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, Lisa See traveled to remote area of China **that, she was told,** only one foreigner before her had ever visited.

F. Between adjectives and nouns

- Incorrect: Headquartered in New York, the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) is a **national, organization** that has local chapters around the country.
- Correct: Headquartered in New York, the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) is a **national organization** that has local chapters around the country.

G. Between two adjectives separated by *but* or *yet*

- Incorrect: Many modern architects choose to design buildings made of glass because it is a **strong, yet elegant** material.
- Incorrect: Many modern architects choose to design buildings made of glass because it is a **strong, yet elegant,** material.
- Correct: Many modern architects choose to design buildings made of glass because it is a **strong yet elegant** material.

H. Before or around “self” words

“Self” words (**emphatic pronouns**) are used to **emphasize** that a particular person or people is being referred to. Each pronoun has an emphatic counterpart.

I = Myself	We = Ourselves
You (sing.) = Yourself	You (pl.) = Yourselves
S/he = Himself, Herself	They = Themselves

It is always **incorrect** to place commas before these words, or before and after them.

Incorrect: The Tower of London, which lies within the Borough of Tower Hamlets, is separated from the city, **itself** (or: **city, itself**), by a stretch of open space.

Correct: The Tower of London, which lies within the Borough of Tower Hamlets, is separated from the city **itself** by a stretch of open space.

However, when a comma would normally be necessary (e.g., before a FANBOYS conjunction or to set off a non-essential clause), it is acceptable to place one after an emphatic pronoun.

Correct: The Tower of London is separated from the city **itself**, **but** it is nevertheless one of London’s most popular tourist attractions.

Correct: The Tower of London, which is separated from the city **itself**, is nevertheless one of London’s most popular tourist attractions.

I. Between an independent clause and a dependent clause begun by certain subordinating conjunctions

To review, when a sentence begins with a subordinate clause, a comma should always be placed between the subordinate clause and the main clause that precedes it, e.g., *When we left the theater, it was still raining.*

The reverse, however, is not necessarily true. When a clause begun by a subordinating conjunction, e.g., *because, unless, until, when*, appears after the main clause, no comma should normally be used.

Incorrect: London is a popular tourist **destination, because** it has so many famous historic sites.

Correct: London is a popular tourist **destination because** it has so many famous historic sites.

When a sentence is long very and/or a break is reasonable for the sake of logic or clarity, however, then a comma is generally considered acceptable.

Acceptable: London is among the top tourist destinations for travelers all over the **world, because** it has such an extraordinary variety of monuments both ancient and modern.

A comma should, however, be used before a clause that begins with a “strong” subordinating conjunction such as *(al)though, even though, or whereas*.

Correct: London has a remarkable number of new **buildings, although** it is a very old city.

Comma Exercise 5: Adding and Removing Commas (All Rules)

Directions: In the following sentences, remove any unnecessary commas, and add commas or other punctuation as required.

1. The novels of William Faulkner are set mostly in Mississippi the state where Faulkner was born, and where he spent most of his life.
2. Some of the most powerful telescopes in the world are now peering across vast distances of space, they are watching for the faintest dip of light or wobble, that could suggest the presence of another world.
3. Because of the dearth of written records from the twelfth century little factual information exists, about the early life of Genghis Khan.
4. Japanese artist Okakura Kakuzo is credited with preserving Nihonga or painting done with traditional Japanese techniques during an era when Western-style painting was threatening to replace it.
5. Thomas Hobbes believed that a strong centralized government is necessary to keep us in line because our nature would otherwise lead us to live lives that he characterized as, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."
6. Culturally and geographically Papua New Guinea is one of the world's least explored countries, however many undiscovered species of plants and animals are thought to exist in its interior.
7. Legendary horseback rider Frank Hopkins claimed to have won over four hundred races many of which were invented by Hopkins, himself.
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9. Elemental iodine, which dissolves easily when it is exposed to most organic solvents is only slightly soluble when placed in water.
10. As an old man Frederick Douglass attributed his youthful interest in freedom and human rights to, *The Daily Columbian* a newspaper that, he discovered at the age of twelve.

11. The Black Sea coast is characterized by the presence of steep mountains, that extend along the entire length of the coast separating it from the inland, Anatolian, plateau.
12. It is unclear whether caffeine actually helps people retain information but early research suggests that it can increase the sensitivity of neurons involved in learning, and memory.
13. Although Tchaikovsky's music is popular with audiences around the world early listeners often dismissed it as vulgar and lacking in elevated thought.
14. In 330 A.D., the seat of the Roman Empire was moved to Constantinople a city that for centuries had occupied a central position on the trade routes between Europe and Asia.
15. In his book *Toward a New Architecture* the modernist architect Le Corbusier stated that, "the motor car is an object with a simple function (to travel) and complicated aims (comfort, resistance, appearance)."

Answers: Comma Exercise 1

1. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was originally intended for an adult **audience**, **but** today it is widely read as part of the high school curriculum in the United States.
2. Because the Rosetta Stone presented the same text in all three ancient Egyptian **scripts**, **it** provided the key to the modern understanding of hieroglyphs.
3. Over two million tourists visit Whistler in British Columbia each **year**, **primarily** for winter sports such as snowboarding and alpine skiing.
4. The average family size in most countries has been steadily **decreasing**, **so** there are fewer children overall than there used to be.
5. **Initially**, photography's status as an art form was unclear: **at the International Exhibition of 1862**, organizers debated whether photographs should be shown with the machines or with the paintings.
6. Although paleontologists often find new dinosaur bones or **footprints**, **the** two types of fossils have not been found together until recently.
7. Ignorance can often be propagated under the guise of balanced debate: for **example**, **the** synthesis of two opposing views does not always result in a rational conclusion.
8. According to United Nations **estimates**, **more** than 240 million people live in a country other than in which they were born.
9. **In 1858**, **architects** Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux won the commission to improve and expand Manhattan's Central **Park**, **and** they began construction on it the same year.
10. The eyes of many predatory animals are designed to enhance depth perception; **however**, they are designed to maximize the field of vision in most other organisms.

Answers: Comma Exercise 2

1. The cesium fountain atomic clock, **the most precise form of timekeeper available**, is expected to become inaccurate by less than a single second over the next 50 million years.
2. **Large-scale social strife, economic stagnation, and an exploding population** all conspired to weaken the Qing Dynasty in nineteenth-century China.
3. Most modern brachiopods, **also known as lamp shells**, prefer **quiet, calm** water; they often attach to the undersides of stones or other hard objects.
4. Forensic biology, **the application of biology to law enforcement**, has been used to identify illegal products from endangered species and investigate bird collisions with wind turbines.
5. Among the reforms introduced during Napoleon's reign were **the abolition of all feudal privileges and historic taxes, the introduction of legal reforms, and the reorganization of local administrative systems**.
6. The paintings of Caravaggio, **which combine a realistic observation of the human state, both physical and emotional, with stark, dramatic lighting**, had a formative influence on Baroque painting.
7. New Zealand, **one of the last lands to be settled by humans**, developed **fascinating, distinctive** forms of wildlife during its long isolation.
8. Frank Gehry's buildings, **critics agree**, are among the most **striking** examples of contemporary architecture found in the United States.
9. The Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh lacks both trains and a functional highway; its isolation, **however**, has helped preserved a traditional way of life.
10. Over the course of his career, photographer and filmmaker George Picker chronicled the lives of artists including **folk singers, jazz musicians, and painters**.

Answers: Comma Exercise 3

1. Emmy-winning actor André Braugher, the youngest of four children, was born **July 1, 1962**, in **Chicago, Illinois**, the son of a postal worker and a heavy-equipment operator.
2. In one of his most famous essays, the transcendentalist philosopher Henry David Thoreau **stated**, “This world is but a canvas to our imagination.”
3. The Dina and Raphael Recanati Chair of Medicine at Harvard Medical School in **Boston, Massachusetts**, Jerome E. Groopman, **M.D.**, grew up in **Queens, New York**, and has been a staff writer in medicine and biology for *The New Yorker* since 1998.
4. The Battle of Antietam was fought on **September 17, 1862**, between Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia and Union General George B. McClellan’s Army of the Potomac near **Sharpsburg, Maryland**, and Antietam Creek.
5. As the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre **asserted**, “existence precedes essence” – in other words, people do not choose to be born, but they are free to determine how to live their lives.
6. When, as an 18-year old undergraduate, the physicist Freeman Dyson asked his mathematics professor Godfrey Hardy why he was writing books instead of proving theorems, Godfrey **responded**, “Young men should prove theorems. Old men should write books.”
7. While competing at the Olympics in **Beijing, China**, the Japanese sprinter Shingo Suetsugu set a record for the 200-meter dash on **August 22, 2008**.
8. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace, his family’s home in **Oxfordshire, England**, on 30 November 1874, a time when the United Kingdom was the dominant world power.
9. Among cities in the United States, **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**, is unique in that it holds the title of UNESCO World Heritage City – an honor that was bestowed on it on **November 6, 2015**.
10. Based on the letters of Robert Gould Shaw, the film *Glory* premiered in limited release in the United States on **December 14, 1989**, and in wide release on **February 16, 1990**.

Answers: Comma Exercise 4

Punctuate the following sentences with commas as necessary.

1. George Westinghouse, **one of Thomas Edison's main rivals**, created his first major invention, **the rotary steam engine**, before the age of twenty.
2. In *The Library: A Catalogue of Wonders*, **Stuart Kells writes**, "Libraries are an attempt to impose order in a world of chaos. They are places of redemption."
3. Used in some martial arts, **the Red Belt, one of several colored belts intended to denote a practitioner's skill level and rank**, originated in Japan and Korea.
4. Although it lacks traditional circus elements like animals and **clowns**, **Cirque du Soleil** continues to draw thousands of spectators around the world each year.
5. Naples, **known internationally for its rich, colorful history**, has played an important political and cultural role both within and beyond the Italian peninsula since it was founded nearly 3,000 years ago.
6. The battleship Potemkin was made famous by its crew's mutiny against commanding **officers**, **a rebellion** that later came to be viewed as an initial step toward the Russian Revolution that began on **November 7, 1917**.
7. Because the city's government has curtailed spending on all non-essential services for lack of **funds**, **the new theater company** has been forced to suspend several of its productions.
8. Copper, **a metal widely used by the ancient Greeks**, had great significance because of its association with **Cyprus, which** was considered a sacred island.
9. Traditional African instruments such as **the Kora, the balafon, and the ngoni** have strongly influenced the sound of French rap music.
10. When Mr. Darcy's feelings have grown too strong to **repress**, **he** approaches Elizabeth Bennet and **proclaims**, "You must allow me to tell you how ardently I love and admire you."
11. During the **1970s**, **the** demand for long-lasting staple foods caused many manufacturers to add preservatives to previously simple **dishes**, **reducing** the quality of their flavors.

12. Long after ancient warriors had ceased to use chariots in **warfare**, **ordinary** citizens continued to rely on them for **traveling over long distances**, **celebrating during festivals**, and **racing them in sporting events**.
13. The Ford Model T, **colloquially known as the Tin Lizzie**, was produced by Ford Motor Company in **Detroit, Michigan**, from **October 1, 1908** to **May 26, 1927**, and is generally regarded as the first affordable automobile.
14. Each **year**, **the** Iditarod dog sled race takes place in **Nome, Alaska**, to commemorate the dogsled teams that delivered a lifesaving serum during the 1925 diphtheria epidemic.
15. According to the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, **a magisterial six-volume compilation of myths, legends, and folktales collected by folklorists in the early twentieth century**, many cultures have told similar stories to explain the occurrence of solar eclipses.

Answers: Comma Exercise 5

1. The novels of William Faulkner are set mostly in **Mississippi, the** state where Faulkner was **born and** where he spent most of his life.
2. Some of the most powerful telescopes in the world are now peering across vast distances of **space; they** are watching for the faintest dip of light or **wobble that** could suggest the presence of another world.
3. Because of the dearth of written records from the twelfth **century, little** factual information **exists about** the early life of Genghis Khan.
4. Japanese artist Okakura Kakuzo is credited with preserving Nihonga, **or painting done with traditional Japanese techniques,** during an era when Western-style painting was threatening to replace it.
5. Thomas Hobbes believed that a strong centralized government is necessary to keep us in line because our nature would otherwise lead us to live lives that he characterized as **“solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”**
6. Culturally and **geographically, Papua New Guinea** is one of the world’s least explored **countries; however,** many undiscovered species of plants and animals are thought to exist in its interior.
7. Legendary horseback rider Frank Hopkins claimed to have won over four hundred **races, many** of which were invented by **Hopkins himself.**
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