

Common Grammatical Mistakes

Commas

Commas are used to separate various parts of a sentence. When do you need a comma? The most common needs for a comma include the following:

Reasons for a Comma	Examples	Additional Explanation
To separate a series if there are more than two items in a sentence or if two adjectives are used in a row.	My favorite foods are french fries, salad, and cheese sandwiches . Her kind, generous spirit is admired by many.	
To separate a non-essential clause (extra information that is not needed to understand the meaning of the sentence) from the rest of the sentence.	My younger brother, the loudest one in the family, is headed to college in August. The dog on the left in the picture is my favorite.	<i>Commas are needed because we do not need to know the brother is the loudest one in the family to understand the main point of the sentence, that he is headed to college.</i> <i>Commas are not needed because “on the left in the picture” is needed information to understand which dog is being referred to.</i>
Before a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet) if there is a complete sentence on the other side of the coordinating conjunction. If there is no complete sentence on the other side, a comma is not needed.	Christopher stayed up too late playing his Switch, so he was very tired at school this morning. Becky is sad and does not want to come to the sleepover.	<i>A comma is needed because there is a complete sentence, with a subject “He” and verb “was” on the other side of “so”.</i> <i>A comma is not needed, because “does not want to come to the sleepover” is not a complete sentence since there is no subject explaining ‘who’ does not want to come to the sleepover.</i>
If a sentence starts with a transitional word or introductory phrase that explains when, where, under what condition or with a cause/effect or if/then statement situation.	In addition, swimming is great exercise. Later this afternoon, we are going to walk to Dairy Queen. Since it is raining outside, the picnic is postponed. If you want to have the best cookies, then you should use butter instead of oil.	
To separate parts of dates and parts of locations .	My best friend lives in Dallas, Texas . My birthday is January 5th, 2010 .	

When a sentence starts with an answer to a question.	No , I don't feel like going.	
	Sure , we could go later.	

Run-on Sentences

Run-on sentences occur when there are two complete sentences that are **not** separated by proper punctuation. A comma cannot combine two sentences together without a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet). Two complete sentences must be combined by a **period**, **semicolon**, or a **comma with a coordinating conjunction**.

Examples:

Raya doesn't like Mexican food. She would rather go to Olive Garden.

The Sound Of Music is a classic movie; many people still love it.

Mondays are busy since I have to go to soccer, **and** I need time to do my homework first.

Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments, or incomplete sentences, occur when there is not a **subject** and a **verb** in a sentence to make it a complete thought. For example:

Sentence Fragment	Complete Sentence
Dove into the ocean.	The diver dove into the ocean.
Lisa's beautiful smile.	Lisa's beautiful smile catches everyone's attention.

Parallel Structure

Sentences must stay consistent with **verb tenses** and the **form of words** used when listing items in order for them to be parallel.

Examples:

Our favorite vacation activities are **biking**, **trying** new restaurants, and **hanging out** in the pool. (*All items in the list are in the "ing" form*).

We **went** shopping last night, but before that, we **ate** at the new sushi restaurant. (*Both verbs are in past tense*).