

# FOUNDATIONAL GRAMMAR

## LESSON TWELVE: COMMAS and FIXING FRAGMENTS & RUN ON SENTENCES

### Commas

Commas can be very confusing little things. If you work on remembering the rules, though, everything will become clear!

The majority of the time, commas are found fencing off extra information in a sentence. Commas divide things up and shepherd them where they need to go. While not a rule to be relied upon, we find that when speaking, we naturally pause briefly before and after inserting some extra information in the sentence, or before we launch into a new thought. . “That dog,(pause) I believe,(pause) was the one who stole the steak.” “I like beef stew, (pause), but he prefers shepherds’ pie.” What we do naturally with a pause in speech, we rely on a comma to do in writing.

There can be extra information in the beginning of a sentence, in the middle, or at the end. Comma Rules 1-4 address extra information that needs to be fenced off. Rules 5-8 address separating *small* pieces of information from each other. Rules 9 and 10 deal more with separating two *longer* pieces of information from each other.

### **Rule 1: Use commas after yes and no at the *beginning* of a sentence, and after an introductory phrase.**

eg: No, I will most certainly not help you.

Having considered that, I am now incredibly discouraged.

Where would the comma go in the sentences below?

Jumping into the lake Mary screamed.

Behind the bushes you will find a snake.

On the other hand I really don’t want to go to work.

Yes I like to draw.

No I don’t want go with you!

Consequently I am very frustrated.

Therefore the giant fell down dead.

In the first place I think you are wrong.

Singing at the top of my lungs I was very happy.

What are some other examples you can come up with using commas after Yes, No, or introductory phrases?

**Rule 2: Use a pair of commas in the *middle* of a sentence to set off clauses, phrases, and words that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence.**

eg: The baby, the one with the weird nose, is playing in the living room.

Eg: The silly men, who ignored the directions in the book, found themselves lost in the woods.

Where should the commas go in the sentences below?

I want to go to the store which opens at 10:00 after we finish breakfast tomorrow.

The boy who had no teeth opened his mouth and laughed.

The party the one where the people got arrested was not much fun.

It seems to be the case then that we should do more research.

The reality in fact is that there is more yardwork to be done outside.

The boy after he combed his hair went to school.

Dad once he eats breakfast is in a much better mood.

I think that James upon receiving his score for his essay will be very happy.

It is possible that when provided with the details of the case the detective will change his mind about the identity of the murderer.

One day after I grow up I will become a famous athlete.

Tomorrow following a brisk walk in the woods I will write a letter to my mother.

What are some examples of your own where a pair of commas is used to set off a clause, phrase, or non-essential word in the middle of a sentence?

\*Note that sometimes when you have a subordinate clause within the middle of the sentence and the clause is introduced with the word “that,” sometimes you only need a comma **after** the clause, but not a **pair of commas**.

Eg. I know that *since I will be chosen for homecoming queen*, I do not have to attend the voting session.

It is true that when I heard the news, I was shocked.

Horatio told me that after he walked onto his boat, he cried out of homesickness.

Where do the commas go in the sentences below?

Don't you think that after we clean our shoes we should put them away?

Mark imagined that once he completed the current level in his video game he would be fine with quitting.

Dominic thought that because he tried hard to be a good boy his grouchy uncle would begin to love him.

What are some examples of your own where you introduce a subordinate clause *within* your sentence with the word “that,” and use a comma after the clause?

**Rule 3: Use a comma near the *end* of a sentence to separate contrasted elements or to indicate a distinct pause or shift.**

Eg: The blond beauty queen was silly, not dumb.

I want to go to the store, not the library.

Does Mary like green ones, or red ones?

George is a monkey that is curious, yet also mischievous.

The man with the yellow hat is a friend, not an enemy.

He is kind, but also gentle.

What are some examples of your own that use a comma to separate a contrasting element at the end of a sentence?

**Rule 4: Use commas to set off words of direct address. (direct address = the sentence is directed towards a specific person.**

eg: You look crazy today, Michelle.

Megan, go wash your face please.

Where do the commas go in the sentence below?

Abraham you should listen to God.

Pack up your things quickly Isaac.

I don't think Sarah that you should have done that.

What are some other examples you can come up with using commas to set off words of direct address both at the beginning, middle, and end of sentences?

**Rule 5: Use commas to separate three or more items written in a series.**

eg: Laura ate cake, strawberries, and cream.

Notice that the comma goes after the first listed item and after each listed item that follows.

What are some example sentences that use commas following Rule 1?

**Rule 6: Use commas to separate items in dates and addresses.**

eg: I was born on June 12, 1485.

I live at 417 Sycamore Lane, Naples, Florida.

Where does the comma go here?

I live in Detroit Michigan.

The attack on the World Trade Center happened September 11 2001.

What are some other examples you can come up with using commas in this way?

**Rule 7: Use commas after the greeting of a friendly letter, and after the closing of any letter.**

eg: Dear Matilda,

Yours truly,

Sincerely,

Recall: what's the difference in punctuation, then, for starting a business letter vs. a friendly letter?

**Rule 8: Use a comma to set off a direct quotation.**

eg: "I want that puppy," said Sheila.

Where do the commas go in the sentence below?

"Please tell me the truth" I sniffled.

James looked up and said "You are very smug today."

**Notice: the direct quotation also begins with a capital letter.**

What are some examples of your own that use commas in this way?

**Rule 9: Use a comma to separate independent clauses when they are joined by a coordinating conjunction: and, but, for, or nor, so, yet.**

eg: I got a puppy, and then it ran away.

Where do you need a comma in the sentences that follow?

I love to eat ice cream after dark and I think it tastes better that way.

Jeremy went to the store but he forgot his glasses.

I think I want to get a dog yet I am a little nervous about keeping an animal alive.

I have decided to sew my own clothes for I have no money to buy them.

Do you think you will forgive Samantha for what she did or will you harbor a grudge forever?

I do not like to wash dishes nor do I like to dry them.

I walked into the empty room and noticed that everyone was staring at me.

What are some examples of your own where you link two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction?

**Rule 10: Use a comma after a subordinate clause when you begin your sentence with the dependent clause rather than the independent clause.**

Eg: After Sally brushed her hair, she walked outside.

(Note that you if started with the independent clause, you wouldn't need the comma after the independent clause: Sally walked outside after she brushed her hair.)

Eg: When the bell rang, I jumped up.

Where should the comma go in the sentences which follow?

Because I like to swim I joined the team.

As I walked over the bridge I heard a man laughing below.

Even though James was a criminal I got the feeling I could trust him.

If you think I am correct about the matter you really should try and convince the others.

Since Jack climbed the beanstalk he was able to find the giant.

What are some examples of your own where you use a comma after starting a sentence with a subordinate clause?

### **Run-on sentences**

A run-on sentence = when you join two (or more) complete sentences together in one sentence, without separating them properly.

eg: I really like chocolate cake my favorite kind is the one my mom makes.

There are a few things you can do to fix a run-on.

a) If the two ideas are closely related, you can separate the two independent clauses with a semi-colon. (**semi-colon = ;** )

eg: I really like chocolate cake; my favorite kind is the one my mom makes.

b) You can use a **comma and a coordinating conjunction** between the two sentences. (**coordinating conjunctions:** for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

eg: I really like chocolate cake, **and** my favorite kind is the one my mom makes.

c) You can join the two ideas with a **subordinating conjunction**. A subordinating conjunction will show the relationship between the two ideas, and joins a dependent clause to an independent clause:

eg: I really like all chocolate cake **even though** my favorite kind is the one my mom makes.

### **Refresh: Subordinating Conjunctions**

Cause / Effect: because, since, so that

Comparison / Contrast: although, even though, though, whereas, while

Place & Manner: how, however, where, wherever

Possibility / Conditions: if, whether, unless

Relation: that, which, who

Time: after, as, before, since, when, whenever, while, until

d) You could make two separate sentences with a period between each of the ideas.

eg: I really like chocolate cake. My favorite kind is the one my mom makes.

**\*\* You cannot simply add a comma between the two complete ideas. This is called a **comma splice**.\*\*** (For example, the following is incorrect: *You cannot simply add a comma between two complete ideas, this is called a comma splice.*)

Let's do some examples together. How would you fix the following run-ons?

My mother is generous she helps other people all the time.

I wish that I had an endless supply of candy I know I'd never get sick of it.

Susan's brother is very lazy I don't want to help him with his homework.

When the bell rang, Jeremy ran out of the school he was late for work.

The silly dog wanted to eat the bone he thought it smelled good and Jackie wanted to give it to him.

Go home get your shoes take a bath because you are smelly.

Give some crazy run-on examples of your own and let's fix them as a class!