

# Using Commas

# Commas should be used:

1. To separate items or adjectives in a list.

## For example:

His favourites puddings were apple pie, rhubarb crumble and ice cream.

Monika wore a red, blue, purple and white jumper.



# Commas should be used:

2. Before these conjunctions: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so* to separate two independent clauses.

**For example:**



She was a fantastic cook, but she would never be as good as her mother.

He had a toothache, so he rang the dentist.



# Commas should be used:

3. To separate a fronted adverbial from the rest of the sentence



**For example:**

Given the terrible weather conditions, the crew of the yacht were lucky to complete the race.

As the last ray of sun disappeared, Yasmine crept silently out of the house.

# Commas should be used:

## 4. To indicate parenthesis

Parenthesis in a sentence adds information and can be removed without changing the meaning.



**For example:**

Milan, the cleverest boy in the class, was often late for school.

CBBC, which is based in Manchester, is a popular children's TV channel.

# Commas should be used:

5. To separate direct speech from the rest of a sentence



**For example:**

“Martina,” called Mum, “it’s time to leave for school.”

“Stop right there,” the man commanded. “This is private property.”

# Commas should be used:

A comma is not always needed in direct speech if another punctuation mark is used to separate the speech from the rest of the sentence.



**For example:**

“Give me the money!” he snarled.  
“Where have you been?” asked Dad.

**NOT**

“Give me the money!,” he snarled.  
“Where have you been?,” asked Dad.



# Commas should be used:

## 6. To separate main and subordinate clauses

**For example:**



While you're waiting, you can read a magazine.

Although I love football, swimming is my favourite sport.





# Commas should be used:

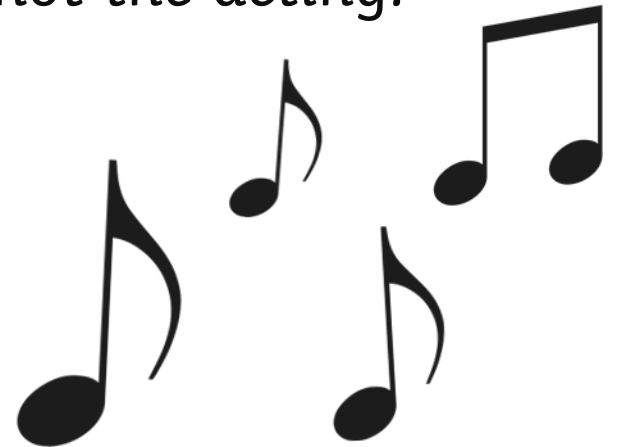
7. To separate elements in a sentence that express contrast

**For example:**



He thought the building was enormous, but ugly.

She enjoyed the music in the show, not the acting.



# Commas should be used:

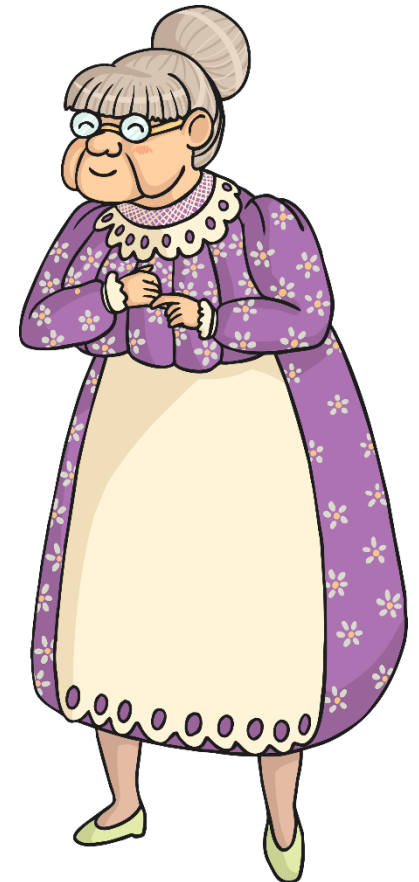
8. To separate dates, years, towns etc.

**For example:**



I grew up in Kentish Town, North London.

My gran was born on March 25th, 1942.



# Comma splices

**Comma splices** occur when two independent clauses are joined by a comma. **Comma splicing is inaccurate and should be avoided.**



**For example:**

Julian usually gets on with everybody, he is an understanding person.



# Comma splices

Instead of a comma splice, the writer could use:

***a semi colon:***

Julian usually gets on with everybody; he is an understanding person.



***or a full stop:***

Julian usually gets on with everybody. He is an understanding person.

# Comma splices

Take care to avoid using a comma splice when punctuating speech. If the parts of speech are separate sentences, they need to be separated by a full stop NOT a comma.

**For example:**



“That cake looks delicious,” she said.  
“Where can I find the recipe?” ✓

**NOT**

“That cake looks delicious,” she said,  
“Where can I find the recipe?” ✗

