

Commas are used to indicate a brief pause in a sentence or separate information/ideas within a sentence.

1. Commas can join sentences when used **with** conjunctions.

, for	, and	, nor	, but
, or	, yet	, so	

Example: Mila and Erika started attending SJSU in the fall. They will not live on campus until their sophomore year.

- ✓ **Correct:** Mila and Erika started attending SJSU in **the fall, but they** will not live on campus until their sophomore year.

Commas are **not strong enough** to join two sentences without a conjunction. When this happens it is called a '**comma splice**'.

- ✗ **Incorrect:** Mila and Erika started attending SJSU in **the fall, they will not** live on campus until their sophomore year.

2. Commas can separate items in a **list**. The list items can be single words or longer phrases.

Examples: Ahmed took Psychology 100W, Volleyball, and Art 100.

Before the event, we had to contact alumni, reserve a space, and distribute invitations.

3. Commas indicate a pause after a **time phrase, 'if' clause, or introductory phrases only** if they are at the **beginning of the sentence**.

- **Since** I transferred from De Anza College, I haven't taken any ESL classes.
- **When** she left, she forgot her laptop.
- **If** Marco passes the GMAT, he'll apply for the MBA program next fall.
- **However**, Marisol was not able to contact him because he left no forwarding address.
- **In 1983**, my grandmother came to the United States from Ecuador.
- My grandmother came to the United States from Ecuador **in 1983. (no comma)**

## Practice

- A.** Avoid comma splices by combining each pair of sentences. Use a comma and a different conjunction for each sentence.
1. I've been to India and China. I have never been to Australia.
  2. The bus was late because of the rain. Tanita was late for class twice this week.
  3. We don't know where the new office will be held. The plans for the new union building have not been made public.
  4. We might do better in Professor Alani's class if we join the study group. Tandra could help us one-on-one.
  5. My aunt claims to be a vegetarian. She still eats fish on occasion.

- B.** Using commas appropriately, write a sentence about three things you did yesterday.
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- C.** Write two sentences using the words or phrases below. Write one sentence with the phrase at the beginning and one sentence with the phrase at the end. Remember to use commas when the words or phrases are at the beginning of the sentence.

Example: **On Tuesday afternoons**

- **On Tuesday afternoons, I usually jog in the park.**
- **I usually jog in the park on Tuesday afternoons.**

1. If my roommate moves out
2. When I graduate
3. Over the course of 3 months
4. Because of the budget cuts
5. Yesterday morning at 8:00

Find out more. Search the web or a grammar book for **comma splices, coordinating conjunctions, serial comma, or comma use.**