Commas (Part 2)

A comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence. Just as a “yield” sign signals the driver to slow down, a comma signals the reader to slow down for understanding. Comma misuses constitute the most common grammatical errors.

Missing Commas in a Compound Sentence

A compound sentence is a sentence that contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so). Commas are used to separate independent clauses when they are joined by a coordinating conjunction.

The comma in a compound sentence is placed before the coordinating conjunction.

E.g., Meredith built a snowman, and Connie shoveled the driveway.

Comma Splices

Comma splices are compound sentences that are not punctuated correctly. In order to avoid simple comma splice mistakes in writing, abide by the following rules:

1. Join the two independent clauses with one of the coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet), and use a comma before the connecting word.
   
   E.g., He watched TV when getting home from work, but she preferred going to the gym instead.

2. When you do not have a connecting word (or when using a connecting word other than: and, but, for, or, nor, so, or yet between two independent clauses), use a semicolon (;).
   
   E.g., He watched TV when getting home from work; she preferred going to the gym instead.


Additional Resources: