

9 USING COMMAS

ANSWER KEY

Practice
WORKSHEET

For each of the following sentences, identify whether commas have been used correctly or incorrectly and then explain your choice.

e.g. While she chopped the vegetables, Toby declared that he had lost his job.

Identify: Correct Explain: Here the comma is being used to separate an introductory element – in this case, a subordinate clause.

1. I don't think I could ever skydive, I am afraid of heights.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: This is an example of comma splice - the sentence requires a coordinating conjunction after the comma.

2. My father loves to fish, hike, snowboard and surf.

Identify: Correct Explain: The commas here correctly separate a list of four items.

3. Ken, who was Barbie's boyfriend, always looked too perfect to me.

Identify: Correct Explain: The commas enclose a parenthetical element. In this case, additional information about who Ken was.

4. Sally started her homework two hours ago and, she just finished.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: This is a compound sentence, and so the comma should come after the first independent clause and *before* the 'and'.

5. It was a large shiny brand-new, computer.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: Here there is a list of adjectives - commas should be used to separate the list (after the first two adjectives).

6. On the other hand, I think that your argument has merit.

Identify: Correct Explain: Here the comma is being used to separate an introductory element.

7. "Don't ever do that again", she said.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: The comma should be placed *inside* of the quotation marks.

8. The computer, which had never been used was finally turned on.

Identify: Incorrect Explain: There needs to be commas either side of the parenthetical information (after 'used').

USING COMMAS

Exercise One

The following sentences are lacking commas. You must add them to correct the sentences.

1. Knowing her as he did, he knew that she felt uncomfortable at the party.
2. Mrs. Smith, who is the history teacher, is the smartest member of staff.
3. "I need to go," she said. Then she added, "That is, if you'll let me."
4. When Ben fell, he dropped the glasses, books, and flowers he had been carrying.
5. As a child, I always thought that I would become a rock star.
6. Go past the tent, turn left, walk to the end of the road, and you will see the school.
7. If you don't like chemistry, why did you study it?
8. Your dad will give you the money, your mum will lend you her car, and then you must go and buy the groceries.
9. "If you give me that tone again," he said, "I will ground you."
10. This week we will be studying verbs, adjectives, sentences, and commas.

Exercise Two

Write your own sentences to show these different uses of commas:

1. To separate items in a list:

2. To separate introductory elements in a sentence:

3. Before or after direct speech:

4. To add an aside (parenthetical information):

5. To separate independent clause (used with coordinating conjunctions).

6. To separate elements of contrast.

7. Commas are used to separate several adjectives.

Understanding COMMA SPLICES ANSWER KEY

In written English, the comma splice is one of the most frequent errors. Make sure that you learn what it is and how to avoid it.

WHAT IS IT?

A **comma splice** is the use of a **comma** to join two independent clauses.



EXAMPLE: *It is late, we will not make the bus on time.*

Either side of this comma, we have independent clauses — sentences in their own right, which can stand alone.

X WRONG

In English, this is considered **incorrect**. In order to join together two independent clauses, we need to use a comma and a coordinating **conjunction** (such as *and*, *so* or *but*). Alternatively, we can write them as two separate sentences, or join them with a semicolon.

EXAMPLES: *It is late, and we will not make the bus on time.*

It is late; we will not make the bus on time.

It is late. We will not make the bus on time.

✓ **RIGHT**
✓ **RIGHT**
✓ **RIGHT**

PRACTICE

For each of the following, decide if they are complete sentences or if there are comma splices.

	Comma Splice	Complete Sentence
1. Susan was always late for work, nobody seemed to care.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. He didn't like to ski, so he always went to the restaurant instead.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Sitting down, she realised she didn't have her work with her.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. English is a difficult subject, Math is easy.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. After I passed my exam, I was allowed to drive alone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. He makes delicious pizzas, I love them.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Jen loves cake, Tom likes cookies, but I love them both.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. It is cold outside, put on a jacket.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. As the students understood their grammar, the teacher was pleased.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. He loved her with all his heart, yet she couldn't love him back.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11. Marking quizzes is bearable, marking essays is painful.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Ben loves to read and travel, he often reads while traveling!	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Although she was tired, she couldn't sleep.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>