

Understanding COMMA SPLICES

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. He didn't like to ski, so he always went to the restaurant instead.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Sitting down, she realised she didn't have her work with her.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. English is a difficult subject, math is easy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. After I passed my exam, I was allowed to drive alone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. He makes delicious pizzas, I love them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Jen loves cake, Tom likes cookies, but I love them both.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. It is cold outside, put on a jacket.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. As the students understood their grammar, the teacher was pleased.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. He loved her with all his heart, yet she couldn't love him back.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Marking quizzes is bearable, marking essays is painful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Ben loves to read and travel, he often reads while traveling!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Although she was tired, she couldn't sleep.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9 USING COMMAS

Practice
WORKSHEET
ONE

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: _____ Explain: _____

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

Identify: _____ Explain: _____

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

Identify: _____ Explain: _____

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

Identify: _____ Explain: _____

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

Identify: _____ Explain: _____

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

Identify: _____ Explain: _____

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

Identify: _____ Explain: _____

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

Identify: _____ Explain: _____

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:
