

This Power Point is about
the punctuation mark:

COMMA



You are learning about... **COMMAS [,]**

Punctuation helps a reader
understand both the
rhythm and meaning of a
sentence.

You are learning about... **COMMAS [,]**

Look at these examples:

1. The panda eats shoots and leaves.

2. The panda eats, shoots and leaves.



Consider the differences between these two sentences. A single comma dramatically changes the meaning!



You are learning about... **COMMAS [,]**

Look at these examples:

1. Let's eat, grandma!

2. Let's eat grandma!



You are learning about... **COMMAS [,]**

COMMAS follow on immediately from a word

The old, broken sign creaked in the wind.

The old , broken sign creaked in the wind

The old ,broken sign creaked in the wind.

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COMMAS are used in several different ways.

It's helpful to think of broadly three ways we use commas:

1. To separate items in a list.

She brought a camera, a sleeping bag and a spare pair of socks.

2. To signal the end of speech.

"Turn left at the crossroads," said Charles.

3. To separate a clause or phrase.

The boy, who was from Sheffield, won the match easily.

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1. To separate items in a list.

Separating adjectives...

The beautiful, happy princess kissed the ugly, green frog.

It was a tall, ugly building.

Separating nouns...

You'll need eggs, milk, butter, flour and a pinch of salt.

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1. To separate items in a list.

Separating a list of words or phrases...

With whom could he share his joy, his relief, his excitement?

She saw the trees on the hillside, the grazing sheep, the tidy hedgerows,
the cloudless sky.

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2. To signal the end of speech.

A comma can be used before the end speech marks in dialogue...

“The train leaves at half past seven,” said the ticket officer.

“What we need is a northerly wind and a calm sea,” explained Justin.

“That car,” began Helen, “is the same one we saw yesterday.”

Sometimes a ? or ! is more appropriate...

“Why is that man shouting?” asked Karen.

“Stop that thief!” demanded the police officer.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.

In sentences starting with a **conjunction connective**, use a comma to separate the two clauses...

If the lever is pulled down, the trap door opens.

Although he knew his mother would be angry, Gary could not resist taking another piece of cake.

While the stage set was being painted, Sir Newton fell asleep in his dressing room.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.

Since late October, Church Road has been closed to all traffic except emergency vehicles.

During the Second World War, many types of food became scarce.

Owing to events beyond our control, tonight's performance of *Romeo and Juliet* has been cancelled.

When you take the bread out of the oven, make sure you use oven gloves.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.

When you start with the stronger clause, you **don't need** the comma...

You don't need the comma **when** you start with the stronger clause.

Many types of food became scarce **during** the Second World War.

Tonight's performance of *Romeo and Juliet* has been cancelled **owing to** events beyond our control.

Sir Newton fell asleep in his dressing room **while** the stage set was being painted.

The trap door opens **if** the lever is pulled down.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.



When you use a sentence start (something other than the subject), you often need a comma after the opening word or phrase...

You are learning about... **COMMAS [,]**

3. To separate a clause or phrase.

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SENTENCE CONNECTIVE SENTENCE STARTS

The snowstorm was the worst since records began. **However,** no schools were forced to close.

The snowstorm was the worst since records began. **As a result,** people were advised not to use their cars.

The snowstorm was the worst since records began. **Moreover,** the Weather Centre reported terrible gales along the east coast.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.



+ING VERB SENTENCE STARTS

Holding her finger up to silence the crowd, the queen looked sternly all around her.

Drawing her sword, Princess Andrea stepped carefully into the darkness.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.



ADVERB SENTENCE STARTS

Unfortunately, the train had already departed.

Cautiously, the cat walked along the fence.

Silently, the thief climbed up the drainpipe.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.



PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE SENTENCE STARTS

Above the clouds, the fighter plane dived and swooped.

With only a few seconds remaining on the clock, Lee kicked the ball into the net.

At eight the following morning, two police officers approached the hideout.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.

A **pair** of commas is used to demarcate a **subordinate clause** in the middle of a sentence...

The wasp, which had come in through an open window in the kitchen, landed ominously on Gerard's bowl of strawberries.

Kelly Sand, who won the 100 metres in 2002, believed that the new track surface helped her performance.

Remember: if the **sub. clause** is in the middle of the sentence, you will need a **pair** of commas.

✗ The fountain pen, which Jamie had bought in WH Smith's cost £3.99.

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3. To separate a clause or phrase.

Similarly, a **pair** of commas is used around an additional **word** or **phrase** in the middle of a sentence.

Will you please, **John**, sit up straight in your chair!

Dr Patricia Henson, **local GP**, was not available for comment.

I am, **as you may have noticed**, feeling rather nervous about this idea.

He was, **however**, the smartest of the two.

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Other uses for commas

Writing the date

On Saturday 3rd October, 2005.

Describing location

George Evans was born in Berlin, Germany.

Before questions tags

That was the right thing to do, wasn't it?

He didn't really say that, did he?

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Contrasting parts of the sentence

That belongs to me, not you.

Before 'but'

The coat fits you very well, but I'm not sure about the colour.

Introductory words

Now, that's a good idea.

Well, I'm not sure those shoes match that dress.

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COMMAS may be used in a variety of ways within the same sentence.

“Andrew,” said Miss Prentice, “tuck in your shirt, do up your laces, pull up your socks and wipe that grin off your face!”

1. To separate items in a list.

2. To signal the end of speech.

3. To separate a clause or phrase.

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At that moment, a large, brown bull, appearing from the corner of the field, let out a loud snort, stamped one of its huge hooves and began to move towards them at a rather worrying speed.

“Well, I think it’s time to leave,” announced Kyle, hastily folding up the picnic blanket.

1. To separate items in a list.

2. To signal the end of speech.

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COMMA SPLICING



A common comma (!) problem is a ‘comma splice’. This happens when two main clauses are incorrectly joined together with a comma when they should be either joined by a **connective** or separated with a **full stop**.

We watched the film, we went home on the bus.

We watched the film. We went home on the bus.

After we watched the film, we went home on the bus.

You are learning about... **COMMAS [,]**



It's nearly dark, we'll never get there in time!

It's nearly dark. We'll never get there in time.

It's nearly dark; we'll never get there in time.

It's nearly dark so we'll never get there in time.

Because it's nearly dark, we'll never get there in time.

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SUMMARY

- > **COMMAS** follow on immediately from a word.
- > **COMMAS** are used to separate words and phrases in a list.
- > **COMMAS** are used to signal the end of speech.
- > **COMMAS** are used to separate clauses and phrases.
- > Do not use a **COMMA** to join two main clauses.