

Joining two sentences

- ✓ Four right ways:
 - **Period:** It stopped raining. We left.
 - **Semicolon:** It stopped raining; we left five minutes later.
 - **Comma + FANBOYS** — *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*: Susan's coffee was hot, so she waited.
 - **Colon,** when the second explains the first: his ambitions had changed: he now planned...
- ✓ **Comma splice:** a comma alone. **Run-on:** nothing at all. Both are wrong
- ✓ Joining clauses: comma before a FANBOYS **only if both sides could stand as sentences** — graduated at the top of his class *and was hired* takes none
- ✓ *For* means *because*, but *because* is no FANBOYS: no comma before it. *Nor* flips the verb: *nor did he want to go*
- ✓ *However, therefore, moreover, nevertheless:* a semicolon or period before, a comma after — never a comma alone

Semicolons, colons, dashes

- ✓ **Semicolon:** joins two related sentences, or separates list items that already hold commas
Frankenstein, Mary Shelley; Dune, Frank Herbert; and Parable of the Sower, Octavia Butler
- ✓ A semicolon never introduces a list
- ✓ **Colon:** a complete sentence before it; a list, example, explanation or restatement after
I need three things from the store: milk, onions, and bread.
- ✓ **One dash** adds emphasis, like a colon: four override bananas — perfect for banana bread
- ✓ **Two dashes** replace the two commas around nonessential words. Never open with a dash and close with a comma

Quotation marks

- ✓ **Commas and periods always go inside**
- ✓ **? and !** go inside when the quote is the question — Simon asked, "Will this be on the test?" — and outside when the whole sentence is: Do you agree that "the early bird gets the worm"?
- ✓ Tag first: comma, then a capital — Dan said, "Let's sit outside." Quote first: its period becomes a comma — "I planted peas today," said Samir
- ✓ A quoted ? or ! stays, and the tag after it is lowercase: "It's my birthday!" squealed Cecilia
- ✓ A quoted fragment takes no comma and no capital: attracted to "the road less traveled"
- ✓ **Scare quotes** mark irony or disagreement: how "terribly sorry" he was

Commas

- ✓ **Introductory element,** one word or twenty: a comma after its last word
Although it was a sunny day with clear blue skies, Vladimir carried an umbrella. Additionally, he wore boots.
- ✓ No commas between the phrases stacked inside an opener:
Under the tree on a quilt with stains,
- ✓ **Nonessential words** — a phrase, an interrupter, a name addressed — take a pair of commas; **essential** ones take none
Stellaluna, a story about a fruit bat, is a favorite. It is important, Roberta, not to...
- ✓ **Lists of three or more:** commas between, with the **Oxford comma** before *and* — always, on the test. Two items take no comma
- ✓ **Coordinate adjectives** — you could swap them, or put *and* between — take a comma: *a rainy, windy night*
- ✓ **Cumulative adjectives** in the usual order take none: *a big gray truck*. The order: **OSASCOMP**
Opinion, Size, Age, Shape, Color, Origin, Material, Purpose — beautiful petite antique pearl earrings
- ✓ No comma between a subject and its verb, or inside a verb phrase: *waited to sip it until*

Which, that, who

- ✓ **which:** nonessential — commas: Her coat, *which was purple*, was hard to spot
- ✓ **that:** essential — no commas: a playlist *that only contains songs about sunshine*
- ✓ **who:** either — commas only if the clause can go: Jared, *who loves a prank*, ... / people *who are fans of Bradbury*

Apostrophes

- ✓ **Singular:** 's, even after an s: Mary's coat, Chris's house
- ✓ **Plural ending in s:** apostrophe only: the teachers' lounge, the Clarks' house
- ✓ **Plural not ending in s:** 's: the men's department, the children's bus stop
- ✓ Never to make a plural, and never in *its, ours, theirs, his*
- ✓ **Contractions** mark missing letters: *it's, you're, they're, won't, can't*

End marks and abbreviations

- ✓ **?** only for a direct question — *He asked me what I wanted* ends with a period. **!** rarely, and never in formal writing
- ✓ **Periods** in titles (*Mr., Dr.*), initials (*P. T. Barnum*) and *e.g., i.e., a.m., p.m.* — with no second one when *p.m.* ends the sentence
- ✓ **None** in a whole name abbreviated (*JFK, USA, UK*), in *mph, rpm*, or in units (*kg, cm*)