

Use a comma to show a pause after a clause or phrase

When clauses and phrases start sentences, they often require a reader to pause before moving on.

To tell a reader to pause, use a comma.

Running at top speed , Gene chased down the school bus.
Gerund Phrase Comma

During the night , Lindsey dreamed she saw a UFO.
Prepositional Phrase Comma

Because he enjoys music , Sean bought tickets to the orchestra.
Subordinate Clause Comma

If no pause is necessary, don't use a comma.

Jennifer hid her lucky marbles in the bushes.
No Comma
Prepositional Phrase

Place commas around an interruption

When writers include an interruption in a sentence, this causes readers to pause.

To remind readers to pause, surround interruptions with commas.

**No
Interruption:** Sue warned us that the roses had thorns.

Interruption: Sue warned us that the roses ^{Comma} , while pretty ^{Comma} , had thorns.
Interruption

If no pause is necessary, do not use commas.

I heard that the roller coaster ^{No Comma} was scary ^{No Comma} and had a really long line.

Note: These interruptions are formally called “parenthetical phrases.”

Comma Splices & Fused Sentences

Rule: Two independent clauses cannot be joined by a comma, nor can they be smushed together with no punctuation.

Comma Splice Error:

Dave likes bananas

Independent Clause

,

comma

he eats them as often as he can.

Independent Clause

Fused Sentence Error:

Dave likes bananas he eats them as often as he can.

Independent Clause

Independent Clause

Solutions:

Dave likes bananas

Independent Clause

.

period

He eats them as often as he can.

Independent Clause

Dave likes bananas

Independent Clause

;

semicolon

he eats them as often as he can.

Independent Clause

Dave likes bananas

Independent Clause

,

comma

so

FANBOYS

he eats them as often as he can.

Independent Clause

Because

SWABI

Dave likes bananas

Independent Clause

,

comma

he eats them as often as he can.

Independent Clause

Dave eats bananas as often as he can

Independent Clause

because

SWABI

he likes them.

Independent Clause

Dave likes bananas

Independent Clause

.

period

Therefore

THAMO

,

comma

he eats them as often as he can.

Independent Clause

Dave likes bananas

Independent Clause

.

period

He eats them

,

comma

therefore

THAMO

,

comma

as often as he can.

Independent Clause
divided into two pieces

Add or Remove commas if necessary.

Singing at the top of his lungs Edgar Allan Poe woke up most of his neighbors.

Singing at the top of his lungs, Edgar Allan Poe woke up most of his neighbors.

Before she went on vacation, Cinderella bought a new neon swimsuit.

Correct

Inside the spy's headquarters Rowan learned about the upcoming mission.

Inside the spy's headquarters, Rowan learned about the upcoming mission.

Add or Remove commas if necessary.

Justin Timberlake challenged me to an arm-wrestling match and wow was I nervous.

Justin Timberlake challenged me to an arm-wrestling match and ,wow, was I nervous.

Rachel Green announced that the rock band as far as she knew would visit our town next week.

Rachel Green announced that the rock band, as far as she knew, would visit our town next week.

Damian Lillard I've been told is an excellent hockey player.

Damian Lillard, I've been told, is an excellent hockey player.

Fix any punctuation in the sentences below

Cinderella is the best gymnast I know she can hold a handstand for thirty minutes.

Cinderella is the best gymnast I know; she can hold a handstand for thirty minutes.

J.K. Rowling doesn't think recess is long enough she hopes the principal adds another fifteen minutes.

J.K. Rowling doesn't think recess is long enough. She hopes the principal adds another fifteen minutes.