

t h e

C O M M A

## Comma Splice

A comma splice is when you use a comma when you should use a period, semi-colon, or conjunction preceded by a comma.

## Introductory Phrases

- The most common introductory word groups are phrases and clauses functioning as adverbs. Such word groups when, where, how, why, or under what conditions. Sentences also frequently begin with participial phrases describing the noun or pronoun immediately following them. The comma tells the reader that they are about to learn the identity of the person or thing described.

however | in addition | finally | first | sometimes  
once a week | in a while | behind the scenes  
walking in the forest

## Lists

Separate items, ideas, or actions in a series with commas.

examples

I need to buy milk, eggs, and a new pen.  
He put down the glasses, poured the water, and refilled the pitcher.

Items may be single words, phrases, or clauses. If the items in the list already have commas in them, separate with semi-colons instead.

example

Last night, I made chicken, broccoli, and celery; tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil; and cheese, crackers, and salami.

## Conjunctions

Commas are commonly used before conjunctions... But not always! Don't worry; here's an easy test for this.

- Take out the conjunction and replace it with a comma.
- Ask yourself if they can stand alone as their own sentence.
- If they can, you need a comma; if not, you don't.

example

*Joseph went to the writing center and a consultant looked over his paper.*

- Take out the conjunction ~~and~~ and replace it with a comma.  
*Joe went to the writing center, and a consultant looked over his paper.*
- Are they both full sentences? Can they stand alone?  
In this case, they can stand alone... Add a comma!  
*Joseph went to the writing center, and a consultant looked over his paper.*

This rule also applies for semi-colons. Only use a semi-colon if both sides of the semi-colon can stand alone as their own sentence.

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