

Comma Usage

(from Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*, 2-7.)



In a series of three or more terms with a single *conjunction*, use a comma after each term except the last:

"He opened the letter, read it, *and* made a note of its contents."

"purple, orange, *or* green"

Do not join independent clauses with a comma:

"It is nearly half past five, we cannot reach town before dusk."

(**Instead:** "It is nearly half past five. We cannot reach town before dark.")

"It is nearly half past five; we cannot reach town before dark."

"It is nearly half past five, and we cannot reach town before dark.")



Place a comma before a *conjunction* introducing an independent clause:

"The situation is perilous, *but* there is still one chance of escape."

"We didn't enjoy the game, *nor* did we celebrate afterwards."

"He has made a decision, *as* he is still unconvinced."

Do not use full stops instead of commas:

"I met them on the plane. Coming home from Argentina."

"She was an interesting person. A traveller from Mongolia."

(**Instead:** "I met them on the plane, coming home from Argentina.")

"She was an interesting person, a traveller from Mongolia.")



Enclose parenthetic expressions between commas:

"The best way to see a country, unless you are pressed for time, is to travel on foot."

"Vicky's husband, Admiral Nelson, paid us a visit yesterday."