

Common Commas

Commas are used in the following situations:

1) Two sentences joined with FANBOYS

_____, for / and / nor / but / or / yet / so _____.
(complete sentence) (complete sentence)

*People use 17 muscles to smile, **but** they use 43 muscles to frown!*

2) After transitional expressions

_____, _____.
(transition) (complete sentence)

*Cortisol is a hormone that helps maintain blood pressure and heart function. **In addition**, it increases the level of sugar in the blood.*

3) Before and after a which-clause

_____, which _____, _____.
(noun in main sentence) (continuation of main sentence)

*The hyoid bone, **which supports the tongue and its muscles**, is the only bone in the human body that does not connect to any other bone.*

4) Giving examples

_____, such as a, b, and c, _____.

_____, for example, a, b, and c, _____.

*Imaging tests, **such as x-rays, CT scans, and MRI scans**, are used to check for deformities in the base of the skull.*

*It is possible to study traditional forms of medicine, **for example, acupuncture**, at some American universities.*

5) Beginning with information that answers Where? When? or Why?

When / Before / After / During / In / Because / Since _____, _____.
(and others) (complete sentence)

When a patient is discharged from the hospital, he must sign a release form.

6) Conditionals

If _____, (then) _____.
(complete sentence) (complete sentence)

If these medications are not effective, surgery is recommended.

7) Lists

_____ a, b, and / or c.

Please note that the comma after item b is optional.

_____ a, b and / or c.

The temporal lobe of the brain is involved in a person's visual perception, emotional responses, and short-term memory.

A comma is not used when there are only two items in a list:

_____ a and / or b.

The temporal lobe of the brain is involved in a person's visual perception and emotional responses.

8) Two equal items joined with "or"

_____, or _____, _____.
(item #1) = (item #2) (complete sentence)

*The Chinese liver fluke, or *Chlonorchis sinensis*, is a worm that settles inside a person's liver.*

Note:

- a) A comma is not used with clauses using “that.”

_____ **that** _____.
(noun in main sentence) (continuation of main sentence)

*Stress releases **powerful hormones that** prepare people for action by creating a “fight or flight” response.*

- b) A semi-colon may be used between two closely related complete sentences:

_____ ; _____.
(complete sentence) (complete sentence)

*The liver is the largest organ in the **body; its** functions include producing bile, changing food into energy, and regulating the blood’s ability to clot.*

- c) A colon is used after a complete sentence to introduce a list that ends the sentence.

_____ : a , b , and c .
(complete sentence) (list)

*Blood contains **three types of cells: red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets.***

Common Commas: Exercise

Directions: Supply the commas in the following paragraphs. There should be at least 15 commas. Three more commas are optional.

Prader-Willi Syndrome

Prader-Willi syndrome or PWS is a genetic disorder that causes short stature developmental disabilities and an uncontrollable appetite that leads to obesity. PWS is caused by a genetic error that occurs near the time of conception and affects approximately 1 in 15,000 people. Individuals with this disorder exhibit a narrow face almond-shaped eyes and a small mouth. In addition PWS is characterized by learning problems such as moderate mental retardation and incomplete sexual development. Another symptom of this disorder is infantile hypotonia which is muscle weakness and low muscle tone. Because of their low muscle tone infants with PWS have difficulty with sucking. Therefore they are often underweight but as individuals with PWS grow they develop an intense interest in food and eat compulsively which leads to obesity. The cause of this problem is a flaw in the part of the brain that normally registers feelings of hunger and being “full.” People with PWS never feel full and they have a continuous urge to eat, which they are unable to learn to control.

Weight management is the most challenging aspect of treating a child with Prader-Willi syndrome. Most people with PWS must follow an extremely low-calorie diet all their lives and they must live in an environment that severely limits their access to food. Some families must lock the kitchen or the refrigerator to prevent a child with PWS from overeating. If patients control their weight their life expectancy can be normal and their general health can be good.