
WHEN NOT TO USE A COMMA

Overdoing It

You have learned when to use a comma. Sometimes people are so worried about using commas correctly that they use them even when they shouldn't. Make sure to use a comma only when you know there is a reason to do so. The following shows the case where people often put in unnecessary commas. Count the number of combined items in each sentence below. Then try to find the comma mistakes.

Bill was intelligent, and interesting.

Bill worked hard, and did exciting things.

Bill gave Joanna small pictures, and other keepsakes.

INSIGHT



What is the comma mistake? Each sentence lists only two items, so no commas are needed. Cross them out in the sentences above.

No comma is needed if only *two* items are combined with *and*.

Now look for a different kind of comma problem.

The rich man, didn't please Joanna.

Joanna, got frustrated with her life.

A man with a lot of money, is not always the best choice.

First, label the subject and verb of each sentence with *s* and *V*. Where are the commas in each sentence? You're right if you said they are between the subject and the verb. Cross them out. They do not belong.

No comma is needed between a subject and a verb.

Here is another comma problem. Cross out the comma that does not belong.

Joanna Married Zack, because he had a lot of money.

No comma is needed before the word because.

Practice

Some of these sentences use commas correctly, but others use them incorrectly. Cross out the commas that don't belong. Remember the rules for using commas. The first one has been done for you.

1. Joanna~~,~~ was married to Zack for five years.
2. She worked on the marriage, but Zack made no effort.
3. The marriage of her dreams, turned into a prison.
4. She wanted her own career, and a happy life.
5. She finally left Zack, because she was miserable.
6. She was no longer rich, so she went back to work.
7. Her new job was interesting, and challenging.
8. Joanna saved her money, rented a nice apartment, and bought some new furniture.
9. She picked up the phone, and called Bill.

A Serious Comma Mistake

You've learned about three common comma mistakes. Now look at an example of another very common kind of comma problem:

Bill answered the phone after five rings, he was very surprised to hear Joanna's voice.

The writer has strung two sentences together using a comma. The result is a run-on sentence! As you recall, one way to fix a run-on is to add a period and a capital letter to make the run-on two separate sentences.

Bill answered the phone after five rings. He was very surprised to hear Joanna's voice.

You can also fix this comma mistake by adding a conjunction after the comma. make sure the conjunction fits the meaning of the sentence.

Bill answered the phone after five rings, and he was very surprised to hear Joanna's voice.

Never use a comma alone to separate sentences.