

PUNCTUATION FOR CONNECTING WORDS

A connecting word helps you clarify to a reader how one idea logically links to the next idea. However, using these words with the correct meanings is only half of the battle. The other half is learning to punctuate them correctly.

1) Coordinating Conjunctions

With the connectors “and” and “or”, if clauses are short and closely related (such as cause and effect), then commas are not generally used. The best way to decide if a comma is needed with “and” and “or” is to decide if there is a clear pause when you read the sentence out loud. However, the other connectors “but, yet, and so” should almost always have commas before them if they separate two clauses.

Coordinators	Examples
And	She loved that movie. It was exciting, and her favorite actor had the lead role.
	Sometimes the demand goes up and the price does not fall.
Or	You could take the children to the park, or you could take them to a movie.
	We need to go now or we will be late for class.
But	James decided to go to a movie, but Kim stayed home to study.
So	He made a lot of mistakes, so he had to do the assignment again.
Yet	Carl usually gets at least eight hours of sleep most nights, yet he’s always tired.

2) Transitions

Notice in the examples below that the transition word “therefore” can have either a semi-colon or a period before it, but that it also has a comma after it. Transition words almost always have punctuation both before and after them.

- Governments need money to operate; **therefore**, they require us to pay taxes.
- Governments need money to operate. **Therefore**, they require us to pay taxes.

3) Subordinators

There are two important differences between subordinators (below) and most other connecting words (above):

- When you put a subordinator between two clauses to connect them, **you should not use any punctuation.**
- When you put the subordinator at the beginning of a clause to introduce the main clause, **you need to put a comma between the two clauses.**
 - He did his homework **before** he turned on the TV.
 - **Before he turned on the TV**, he did his homework.

4) Prepositional Phrases that join ideas

Compare the following two sentences. Look at how the preposition of works in the second sentence.

- **Because** the test was scheduled for the next day, James stayed home to study.
- **Because of** the test the next day, James stayed home to study.

Whenever a preposition is used to help join two parts of a sentence, the preposition is never followed by a verb.

- We didn't go camping **because of** the rain.
- **In spite of** the rain, we went camping.

In the following examples, you can see that prepositional phrase connectors use the same punctuation rules as subordinators.

- Do not use any punctuation when a prepositional phrase connector is in the middle of sentence.
- Margaret couldn't call her husband on her cell phone **because of** a dead battery.
- b) Use a comma after the end of the prepositional phrase if the sentence begins with the phrase:
- **Because of** a dead battery, Margaret couldn't call her husband on her cell phone.

SUMMARY OF PUNCTUATION RULES

If used properly, punctuation marks can greatly enhance the overall structure, organization, and clarity of writing. Punctuation marks are symbols that indicate the structure and organization of written language, as well as intonation and pauses to be observed when reading aloud. In written English, punctuation is vital to disambiguate the meaning of sentences.

For example, "woman, without her man, is nothing" (emphasizing the importance of men) and "woman: without her, man is nothing" (emphasizing the importance of women) have greatly different meanings.

Period

1. At the end of **declarative** and **imperative** sentences:
Declarative (a statement): The book is on the desk.
Imperative (a command): Go to the grocery store and buy milk.
2. In abbreviations:
Ed Wilson, Ph.D. will be lecturing about insects.
Ms. Audrey Aimes is an award-winning photographer.
3. As elements of ellipses, which indicate omitted words:
Just before he lost consciousness, the victim whispered, "Help me . . ."
4. Inside quotation marks:
The determined scientist thought to himself, "I must find a solution."

Comma

1. Between main clauses with a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so):
The movie was terrible, and the audience was making fun of it.
2. Between individual items in a series or list:
Remember to buy milk, butter, eggs, bread, and juice.
3. After names in a direct address:
Joe, will you please pass the butter?
4. After introductory expressions:
Unfortunately, I only had a 2.5 GPA last semester.
5. Around appositives (a word or phrase that renames or defines a preceding noun):
Barry Bonds, the best home run hitter in baseball, is left-handed.
6. After an introductory dependent clause:
After she had worked at the company for six years, she decided she hated her job.
7. Before such as when it is followed by an example or a list:
Read a good book, such as The Perks of Being a Wallflower.
8. Around a thrown-in interrupting expression (However, I think, After all, etc):
Bill Clinton is, in my opinion, a terrible role model.

9. Around non-limiting (non-restrictive, non-essential) clauses, phrases, or information:
Mulberries, which happen to be my least favorite Betty, are expensive this year.
10. With quotations:
Sigmund Freud asked, "What do women want?"
11. Between elements in locations, dates, or addresses:
My father was born on December 31, 1953, in the morning. (Do not use commas if the date is inverted—17 March 204—or if it does not include the day.)
12. After introductory verbals or verbal phrases:
Sleeping soundly, Linda did not wake up when the earthquake hit.
13. Before and after an element that contrasts with a previous element:
Now that I have a good job, I get paid a better salary, not minimum wage.

Quotation Marks

1. Around the exact words of a speaker:
The teacher said, "We will have an exam next Tuesday."
2. Around titles of songs, short articles or essays, stories, poems:
Nancy quoted from the article "Lost Heroes" in her research paper.
3. When using quotation marks within a quotation, use single quotation marks:
Tony asked Nancy, "Can I read 'Lost heroes' when you are finished using it?"

Question Mark

1. At the end of a direct question, but not when the sentence is not a direct question:
Do you know the way to San Jose?
David asked me if I knew the way to San Jose.
2. Within parentheses:
Aristotle died in A.D. 600 (?).
3. With quotation marks:
 - Inside the quotation marks only when the question mark is part of the quoted text:
I asked, "May I borrow a pencil?"
 - Outside the quotation marks when the question mark is not part of the quoted text:
Do you know the meaning of the word "juxtaposition"?

Semicolon

1. In place of a comma and a conjunction to join independent clauses:
I'm not hungry; he wants to eat a big lunch.
2. Before a conjunctive adverb (like however or therefore):
I want to transfer to UCLA or USC; therefore, I need to get good grades at LBCC.
3. Between items in a list when the list items have commas:
Three movies I have seen recently are Jaws, about a killer shark off the coast of New England; K-19, about a Russian submarine; and Pod People, about a little boy who makes friends with an alien.

Colon

1. Before a series or list that follows a complete sentence (do not use a colon in the middle of a sentence):
To lose weight, you should do the following: exercise regularly, eat healthy foods, and drink less alcohol.
2. When introducing a quotation after a complete sentence:
Remember the words of the great Yogi Berra: "It ain't over until it's over."
3. In a salutation of a formal letter:
To Whom It May Concern: (Salutations in less formal letters tend to have commas.)
4. Between hours and minutes and between minutes and seconds of time:
The space shuttle lifted off at exactly 11:40:29 this morning.

5. Before an appositive, explanation, or example that follows a complete sentence:
In the history of major league baseball, two teams have played in Seattle: the Pilots (1969 only) and the Mariners (1977-present).
6. Between main clauses when the first signals that the second will provide an answer or definition:
Faith is like love: It cannot be forced.
7. In proportions:
The ratio of students to teachers was 30:2.

Activities

A. Punctuate the following sentences

1. He is not really nice looking and yet he has enormous charm
2. When I was a child I could watch TV whenever I wanted to
3. It is a fine idea let us hope that it is going to work
4. Mrs Solomon who was sitting behind the desk gave me a big smile
5. We were believe it or not in love with each other
6. I don't like this one bit said Julia
7. Have you met our handsome new financial director
8. If you are ever in London come and see you
9. Michael in the Ferrari was cornering superbly
10. Looking straight at her he said I can't help you

B. Add correct punctuation (periods and commas) to the following paragraph:

Mark loves to travel but Amy doesn't so they often argue about where to spend their vacation time one summer they decided to try something different Mark went to Thailand but Amy stayed home Mark's brother, Alex, and sister-in-law, Jennifer, went with him they knew that they could only spend one week in Thailand so they had to decide what to do they could all go scuba diving in Southern Thailand or Mark could go by himself on an elephant trek in Northern Thailand and Alex and Jennifer could meet him later in Bangkok Mark chose the elephant trek and he had an exciting time Amy was also having a good time back home sometimes she went out with her friends at night and sometimes her mother would visit her during the day she also liked to spend time by herself practicing her piano Mark and Amy learned that they could spent their vacations separately yet they both could have a good time

C. Practice what you have learned about punctuating connecting words by adding correct punctuation to the following paragraph:

Although new technology creates new kinds of jobs new technology also usually makes many existing jobs disappear for example when trains started to be used as a primary form of transportation many jobs that depended on horses and oxen started to disappear later automobiles became the major form of transportation as a result railroad companies could no longer keep as many people employed another new kind of technology that is leading to job loss is the digital camera companies that make film are laying off workers because so many consumers are switching from cameras that use film to cameras that take digital photographs in the same way cell phones make public pay phones less profitable so telephone companies no longer need to employ as many technicians to install and maintain pay phones while it is true that technological change can produce new wealth and new jobs new inventions also tend to lead to the loss of jobs