

Finding **Commas** in All the Wrong Places



THE WRITING CENTER
JUDITH G. GARDNER CENTER FOR WRITING EXCELLENCE

Adapted from Beth Hill

Commas are used to separate words and phrases into chunks of information that make sense to the reader. Incorrect use of commas can cause confusion or even a misreading of the information.

1. **Don't use commas to separate two subjects doing the same thing.**

She and her cat were thrown from the spinning ride. ✓

Billy, and Buster wanted burgers for dinner. ×

2. **Don't use commas to separate two actions of a subject.**

Tootie drank the moonshine and passed out. ✓

Elmer and Emerson walked to the grocery store, and bought Scooter Pies. ×

3. **Don't use commas to separate the actor from the action.**

Richard was happy to win the award. ✓

The red bus, careened toward the crowd at the bus stop. ×

Stuffed into Glen's pocket, were his prized marbles. ×

4. **Don't use commas to separate the verb from the rest of the action.**

What Belle wanted to do was save the beast. ✓

The most important thing to remember is, that I love you. ×

5. **Don't use commas before the first or after the last item in a series.**

We ate, steak, lobster, chicken, and candy bars for breakfast. ×

Morgan, Pat, and John, ran for their cars at the news. ×

6. **Don't separate two nouns in a compound object.**

The Pinkertons feared that their quarry was long gone and that they'd never find him.

Tension mounted when the hit man fingered the rifle, and the pistol. ×

Don't separate adjectives from the words they modify.

7. Michael loved his squishy teddy bear. ✓

The bright, beautiful, star drew everyone's attention when night fell. ×