

# 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.**

Incorrect: **Billy, and Buster** wanted burgers for dinner.

Correct: **She and her cat** were thrown from the spinning ride.

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

Incorrect: Elmer and Emerson **walked to the grocery store, and bought Scooter Pies.**

Correct: Tootie **drank the moonshine and passed out.**

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

Incorrect: **The red bus, careened** toward the crowd at the bus stop.

Incorrect: **Stuffed** into Glen's pocket, **were his prized marbles.**

Correct: **Richard was** happy to win the award.

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

Incorrect: The most important thing to remember **is, that I love you.**

Correct: What Belle wanted to do **was save the beast.**

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

Incorrect: We ate, **steak, lobster, chicken, and candy bars** for breakfast.

Incorrect: Morgan, Pat, and John, **ran for their cars** at the news.

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

Incorrect: Tension mounted when the hit man fingered **the rifle, and the pistol.**

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

7. **Don't separate adjectives from the words they modify.**

Incorrect: The bright, **beautiful, star** drew everyone's attention when night fell.

Correct: Michael loved his **squishy teddy bear.**