

Just a Wee Bit of Comma Review

1. List the 7 coordinating conjunctions to which you must pay attention when deciding on your use of commas:

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____

2. Explain the comma rule that is used when punctuating dates in a sentence (including day of the week, month, day and year): _____

3. Write a correctly punctuated single sentence that uses all of the elements mentioned above (day of the week, month, day and year): _____

4. Explain the comma rule that is used when punctuating geographical locations (such as city and state or city and country): _____

5. Write a correctly punctuated single sentence that uses one of pair of elements mentioned above (city and state or city and country): _____

6. Explain the comma rule that is used when listing a series of three or more items (be sure to explain the "optional" part of this rule): _____

7. Write a correctly punctuated single sentence that includes a listing of a series of three or more items: _____

8. Explain the comma rule that is used when connecting two independent clauses with one of the 7 coordinating conjunctions you listed in #1: _____

9. Write a correctly punctuated single sentence that includes the elements mentioned above (two independent clauses connected with one of the 7 coordinating conjunctions listed in #1):

And just when you thought you knew everything...

Most of the time (treat it as about a 90-95% rule) you *should* use a comma between the independent clauses in a compound sentence. But occasionally it is permissible, and sometimes even preferable, to leave that comma out.

The current trend in American style is toward minimal punctuation. In other words, commas are seen as speed bumps, and we don't want unnecessary obstacles to slow down our readers. Many permissible commas can be left out of sentences where they once might have been required, or at least strongly preferred. Therefore, under certain circumstances, the comma between independent clauses in a compound sentence can be left out.

Here are the guidelines for deciding whether to omit the comma in a compound sentence:

1. If both independent clauses are quite short, especially if the two clauses are very closely related, and even more so if the subject of both clauses is the same, then you can consider omitting the comma:

- **He threw me the book and I dashed out the door.**
- **Linda washed the dishes and Naomi cleaned up the living room.**
- **I've been waiting for this letter but now I wish it hadn't come.**

2. Never omit the comma if there is any chance that your sentence will be misread, even if only for a moment.

- **AMBIGUOUS: We finished eating dinner and then the children cleared the table.**
- **IMPROVED: We finished eating dinner, and then the children cleared the table.**

If there is ever any doubt, however, use the comma, as it is always correct when joining two independent clauses with one of the seven coordinating conjunction you have learned.