

BASIC PUNCTUATION RULES

1. Compound Sentences

When joining two independent clauses in a sentence, place a comma before coordinating conjunctions: **for, and, nor, but, or, yet and so (FANBOYS)**.

- a) The Corona pandemic has dramatically affected people's civil liberties, **and** it has also negatively impacted the global economy.
- b) A comprehensive vaccination program may solve the problem, **yet** social distancing will still be required for many more months.

2. Introductory Elements

Separate introductory words or phrases from the main clause with a comma.

- a) **In a number of developing countries**, girls still spend considerably less time in education than their male counterparts.
- b) **Unfortunately**, it is impossible to predict when the measures will begin to take effect.

3. Parenthetical information

Place commas around parenthetical information (which does not affect the grammar or meaning of the main clause).

- a) Edvard Munch, **the Norwegian painter and graphic artist**, is best known for his work *The Scream*.
- b) Greenhouse gases, **such as CO2 and Methane**, are largely responsible for the current climate crisis.

4. Relative clauses

Place a comma before a non-defining relative clause (which provides additional information without affecting the meaning of the main clause) when it appears at the end of a sentence and also a comma after it if it appears in the middle of a sentence.

- a) Pottery, **which is one of the oldest human inventions**, originated before the Neolithic period.
- b) The process of "throwing" begins when a ball of clay is placed in the centre of the turntable by the potter, **who rotates it with a stick or foot power**.

Note. When the relative clause is a defining clause, no comma is used:

Pottery **that is produced in Finland** is considerably more expensive than that manufactured in the Far East.

5. Items in a Series

Use a comma to separate items in a list of more than two items. Use a comma before 'and' in such lists when following the serial comma style, which is preferred in American English.

a) Aalto University was formed by the merger of Helsinki University of Technology, University of Art and Design Helsinki, and the Helsinki School of Economics.

6. Subordinate clauses

When a subordinate clause begins a sentence, separate it from the main clause with a comma.

a) **If you fail to complete your language credits**, you will be unable to graduate.

b) **Whereas completing a Bachelor's degree usually takes three years**, a Master's degree should only require two years of study and research.

Note. Commas are not usually used when the subordinate clause follows the main clause

a) However, students often take much longer than two years to complete their master's **because they have often already entered working life by that stage.**

Note. Commas are often used with **while, since, as** when they are used in a non-time sense.

a) Some forms of comic art are highly respected in academic circles, **while others are considered a low-brow form of popular culture.**

7. Coordinate adjectives

Use a comma to separate two or more coordinate (equal) adjectives

a) He was known as a humorous, generous, warm-hearted person.

Note. Not all adjectives are coordinate. 'Humorous', 'generous', and 'warm-hearted' can be joined with 'and' and their order can be switched. '**Pink electric toothbrush**' is an example where the adjectives cannot be joined with 'and'; nor can their order be changed. Thus, no comma should be used.

8. Resultative -ing clauses

Use a comma before resultative -ing clauses.

a) Fast fashion is characterized by cheap, throw-away clothing, **leading to massive amounts of unnecessary waste.**

b) Slow fashion has risen in opposition to fast fashion, **emphasizing classic styles and sustainable practices over brief trends.**

SEMICOLONS

1. **Use a semicolon (;) to join two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning.**

a) Marketing is the key driver of fast fashion; it creates the desire for the constant consumption of new designs.

2. **Use a semicolon to separate items in a series when the items themselves already have internal punctuation within the item.**

a) Aalto University is comprised of the Schools of Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Science; the School of Business; and the School of Arts, Design and Architecture.

3. **Use a semicolon before transitional connectors (however, moreover, etc.) when they connect two independent clauses.**

a) Many people wish to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle; **nevertheless**, very few are willing to give up eating meat.

COLONS

1. **Use a colon (:) after an independent clause to introduce a list.**

a) The Department of Media offers degrees in the following disciplines: New Media, Visual Communication Design, and Photography.

2. **Use a colon to introduce an example or an explanation related to something just mentioned.**

a) Vegetarianism can make a positive contribution to the environment: it decreases the need for grazing land for livestock, thereby reducing deforestation.