

Kommatering:

Komma

Engelsk har ikke grammatisk komma men pausekomma

Engelsk **har ikke** komma:

1 foran genstandssætninger (indledes ofte med that)

*He realised he was late*

*She felt that she was flying*

2 foran afhængige spørgesætninger (indledes ofte med what, where, when, if)

*She did not say where she was going  
Please tell me if I am wrong*

3 foran bestemmende relativsætninger (dvs. relativsætninger, som ikke kan udelades, fordi de udgør en nødvendig bestemmelse af et led i sætningen)

*Where is the book you referred to?  
The woman who wears a hat is my wife*

NB I genstandssætninger, afhængige spørgebisætninger og bestemmende relativsætninger er der ikke ophold i talen, og intonationskurven brydes ikke ved overgang fra hovedsætningen til bisætningen

4 foran bisætninger, der følger efter hovedsætningen

*I'll show you next time we meet  
He saw her when she returned*

Engelsk **har** komma:

1 omkring parentetiske relativsætninger

*Mr Brown, who is an Irishman, is coming today  
My wife, who has just returned from London, will assist you*

2 når bisætningen står foran hovedsætningen

*If you come now, I'll do it  
When I got home, my house was on fire*

3 foran direkte tale, hvor dansk har kolon

*She said, "I want my dinner now".  
"I'll leave you," she said, "if you don't accept it".*

4 ofte foran og efter adverbier og andre indskud, hvor der holdes en pause i talen. Adverbier indskud som fx *however, too, indeed, therefore, on the contrary*

*In fact, I rather like him.  
My sister, however, did not agree*

5 ofte mellem to hovedsætninger

*He looked everywhere, but she had left two hours earlier  
She loved classical music, and her sister shared her passion*

6 foran sidste led i en opremsning kan komma anvendes

*They have got a home, an expensive car, and a dog*

## Øvelse

## 6 letters

Americans usually put a colon after the opening salutation (*Dear . . .*) in a business letter.

*Dear Mr. Callan:*

*I am writing to . . .*

British usage prefers a comma or no punctuation mark at all in this case.

## 455 punctuation (3): comma

Commas (,) generally reflect pauses in speech.

### 1 lists

We use commas to separate items in a series or list. In British English, a comma is not usually used with *and* between the last two items unless these are long. Compare:

*I went to Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Germany.*

(US: . . . Austria, and Germany.)

*You had a holiday at Christmas, at New Year and at Easter.*

*I spent yesterday playing cricket, listening to jazz records, and talking about the meaning of life.*

### 2 adjectives

In predicative position (see 15), commas are always used between adjectives.

*The cowboy was tall, dark and handsome.*

Before a noun, we generally use commas between adjectives which give similar kinds of information.

*This is an expensive, ill-planned, wasteful project.*

Commas are sometimes dropped between short adjectives.

*a tall(,) dark(,) handsome cowboy*

Commas cannot be dropped when modifiers refer to different parts of something.

*a green, red and gold carpet* (NOT ~~a green-red . . .~~)

*concrete, glass and plastic buildings*

Commas are not normally used between adjectives that give different kinds of information.

*Have you met our handsome new financial director?*

(NOT . . . ~~our handsome, new, financial director?~~)

### 3 word order

If words or expressions are put in unusual places or interrupt the normal progression of a sentence, we usually separate them off by commas.

*My father, however, did not agree.*

*Jane had, surprisingly, paid for everything.*

*We were, believe it or not, in love with each other.*

*Andrew Carpenter, the deputy sales manager, was sick.*

Two commas are necessary in these cases.

(NOT ~~Andrew Carpenter the deputy sales manager, was sick . . .~~)

#### 4 identifying expressions

When nouns are followed by identifying expressions which show exactly who or what is being talked about, commas are not used. Compare:

*The driver in the Ferrari was cornering superbly.*

(The phrase *in the Ferrari* identifies the driver.)

(NOT ~~*The driver, in the Ferrari, was cornering superbly*~~ OR ~~*The driver in the Ferrari, was cornering superbly.*~~)

*Stephens, in the Ferrari, was cornering superbly.*

(The phrase *in the Ferrari* does not identify the driver; he is already identified by his name, Stephens.)

*The woman who was sitting behind the reception desk gave Parker a big smile.*

*Mrs Grange, who was sitting behind the reception desk, gave Parker a big smile.*

For more about identifying and non-identifying relative clauses, see 474.

#### 5 co-ordinate clauses

Clauses connected with *and*, *but* or *or* are usually separated by commas unless they are very short. Compare:

– *Jane decided to try the home-made steak pie, and Andrew ordered Dover sole with boiled potatoes.*

*Jane had pie and Andrew had fish.*

– *She had very little to live on, but she would never have dreamed of taking what was not hers.*

*She was poor but she was honest.*

#### 6 direct speech

A comma is generally used between a reporting expression and a piece of direct speech.

*Looking straight at her, he said, 'There's no way we can help him, is there?'*

If a reporting expression follows a piece of direct speech, we usually put a comma instead of a full stop before the closing quotation mark.

*'I don't like this one bit,' said Julia.*

#### 7 subordinate clauses

When subordinate clauses begin sentences, they are often separated by commas. Compare:

*If you are ever in London, come and see me.*

*Come and see me if you are ever in London.*

Commas are not used before *that*-clauses.

*It is quite natural that you should want to meet your father.*

(NOT ~~*It is quite natural, that...*~~)

#### 8 indirect speech: no comma before *that* etc

We do not put commas before *that*, *what*, *where* etc in indirect speech structures.

*Everybody realised that I was a foreigner.*

(NOT ~~*Everybody realised, that...*~~)

*They quickly explained what to do.*

(NOT ~~*They quickly explained, what...*~~)

*I didn't know where I should go.* (NOT ~~*I didn't know, where...*~~)

## 9 grammatically separate sentences

We do not usually put commas between grammatically separate sentences (in places where a full stop or a semi-colon would be possible – see 457 and 459).

*The blue dress was warmer. On the other hand, the purple one was prettier.*

(OR *The blue dress was warmer; on the other hand...*)

(NOT ~~*The blue dress was warmer, on the other hand...*~~)

## 10 numbers

Commas are used to divide large numbers into groups of three figures, by separating off the thousands and millions.

6,435 (NOT ~~6.435~~)      7,456,189

We do not always use commas in four-figure numbers, and they are never used in dates.

3,164 OR 3164      the year 1946

Spaces are sometimes used instead of commas.

*There are 1 000 millimetres in one metre.*

We do not use commas in decimals (see 385.1).

3.5 = three point five OR three and a half (NOT ~~3,5~~ ~~three comma five~~)

## 456 punctuation (4): dash

Dashes (–) are especially common in informal writing. They can be used in the same way as colons, semi-colons or brackets.

*There are three things I can never remember – names, faces, and I've forgotten the other.*

*We had a great time in Greece – the kids really loved it.*

*My mother – who rarely gets angry – really lost her temper.*

A dash can introduce an afterthought, or something unexpected and surprising.

*We'll be arriving on Monday morning – at least, I think so.*

*And then we met Bob – with Lisa, believe it or not!*

For the use of hyphens (as in *hard-working* or *co-operative*), see 532.

## 457 punctuation (5): full stop, question mark and exclamation mark

### 1 sentence division

Full stops, question marks and exclamation marks are used to close sentences. A new sentence that follows one of these has a capital letter.

*I looked out of the window. It was snowing again.*

*Why do we try to reach the stars? What is it all for?*

*They have no right to be in our country! They must leave at once!*

*He looked everywhere but she had left two hours earlier.*

*She loved classical music and her sister shared her passion.*

*He realised he was late.*

*She felt that she was flying.*

*Mr Brown who is an Irishman is coming today.*

*My wife who has just returned from London will assist you.*

*She did not say where she was going.*

*Please tell me if I am wrong.*

*Where is the book you referred to?*

*The woman who wears a hat is my wife.*

*If you come now I'll do it.*

*When I got home my house was on fire.*

*I'll show you next time we meet.*

*He saw her when she returned.*

*She said "I want my dinner now".*

*"I'll leave you" she said "if you don't accept it".*

*In fact I rather like him.*

*My sister however did not agree.*

*They have got a home an expensive car and a dog*