

## Lesson 1. Punctuation

### Comma (,)

Use commas before **and, but, or, so, yet** when they start an independent clause after the main clause. (Note: an independent clause is a clause that can function as a complete sentence.)

- We were extremely occupied with the new project, **and** I just forgot to call you back.
- The relaxing time was over, **but** I refused to admit it.
- I can send the information via email, **or** we can discuss it face-to-face on Thursday.
- The results were great, **yet** the team wasn't fully satisfied.
- On Wednesday she had a very productive day, **so** the next day she took a day off.

Do **NOT** put a comma before **and, but, or** when they join a phrase or dependent clause to the main clause.

- She called the colleague **and** asked for help.
- I worked all day **but** didn't finish all I wanted.

Use commas after introductory clauses when they start with **after, although, as, because, if, since, when, and while** before the main clauses.

- **While** I was eating, somebody knocked at the door.
- **Because** her car broke down on the way, she was late for work.
- **Since** we have brainstormed so many good ideas, it should be no problem to find a solution to the issue.
- **If** you cannot do it on time, we can extend the deadline.
- **When** the right time comes, we'll let you know all the details.

Do **NOT** put a comma when the sentence starts with the main clause.

- Somebody knocked at the door **while** I was eating.
- She was late for work **because** her car broke down on the way.
- We can extend the deadline **if** you cannot do it on time.
- We'll let you know all the details **when** the right time comes.

If linking words or phrases **moreover, as a result, in addition, for example, however, on the contrary, etc.** start a sentence, they are followed by a comma.

- Prices were reduced by 20%. **As a result**, sales increased.
- The trip is too expensive. **Besides**, I don't really like hot weather.
- The company is expanding. **Consequently**, there are jobs to offer.
- **However**, you may not be satisfied with the results.

Use a comma after introductory **yes/no** and **well**.

- **Well**, perhaps he meant no harm.
- **Yes**, the package should arrive tomorrow morning.

Do **NOT** use a comma after an introductory **please**. However, please note that a comma is almost always required before **please** at the end of the sentence.

- **Please** send me the document by Friday.
- Send me the document by Friday, **please**.

Usually, there is no comma before words like **that, which, who, where, how, what, when**, and **why**.

- Cars **that** don't have seat belts aren't allowed to carry children.
- I don't know **which** one I want.
- Could you tell me **where** it is?

### Colon (:

Use a colon when the information following the colon provides more explanation.

- There is only one thing left for you to do: (what is it?) call Mike and explain the importance of the forthcoming event.

- I need to improve my writing skills asap: (why?) my new job requires a lot of communication via emails.

Use a colon before a list of items.

- In the meeting we want to discuss several important items: the deadline, future plans, and teambuilding activities.

### Semicolon (;)

Use a semicolon to join two closely-related independent clauses if there is no conjunction (**and, but, etc.**).

- I watched the game last night; it made me sad to see my favorite team lose.  
(*or I watched the game last night, and it made me sad to see my favorite team lose.*)
- Most people read electronic books; others still prefer to read paper ones.  
(*or Most people read electronic books, while others still prefer to read paper ones.*)