

The Mechanics of Writing

Which Comes First, the Comma or the Pause?

ORDERING INFORMATION

Order your copy of *The Mechanics of Writing* from Amazon.com or bookstores everywhere. To receive a discount on bulk orders, contact the publisher directly at 877-933-0910 or www.wtkpublishing.com.

Dona J. Young

The Mechanics of Writing

Dona J. Young

Copyright © Writer's Toolkit Publishing LLC

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States

Published by

Writer's Toolkit Publishing, LLC

109 Ogden Road Portage, IN 46368

877-933-0910

www.wtkpublishing.com

The authors and editors have used their best efforts to insure that the information presented herein is accurate at the time of publication.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the author.

This edition published in association with

Professor Textbook

4010 West 86 Street, Suite H

Indianapolis, IN 46268

www.ProfessorTextbook.com



ISBN: 978-159858-817-0

Library of Congress Control Number: Applied For

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Printed in the United States of America

Introduction

The Mechanics of Writing starts by posing a question common to most writers: *Which comes first, the comma or the pause?* Learning the answer to this basic question is the doorway to understanding punctuation as well as structure. Right now, let's cut to the chase and give you an answer you may not be expecting: *the comma comes first, the pause follows.*

That is the opposite of what the vast majority of writers believe, even good writers. If this news feels like a revelation to you, as it does to most, you can understand why some writing decisions are so confusing at times. In fact, other types of writing decisions may baffle you as well; for example, do you always know the difference between a fragment or a run-on and a complete sentence? Do you sometimes feel a bit nervous about your writing when someone such as a teacher or your boss will read it?

Learning comma rules, like most grammar topics, is like unrolling a ball of yarn. Principles of one topic are linked to principles of another topic—that is why it sometimes feels impossible to make progress. However, this book untangles that ball of yarn for you, helping you make decisions that lead to correct writing. As you learn each new principle, your editing skills will improve and, thus, the quality of your writing will also improve.

This little handbook, unlike other grammar handbooks, organizes the essential topics for you, ordering them so that learning makes sense. In other words, this book develops a string of concepts that builds from one to another. This approach simplifies learning the mechanics of writing, but it is up to you to apply what you are learning in your own writing.

That is why it is important to learn some basic principles about sentences before jumping right in and starting with comma rules. By the time you start working on comma rules in Lesson 4, the terminology will not sound overwhelming. In fact, the foundation that you are building will make writing easier for you for the rest of your career.

Start by taking the pretest at the end of Lesson 1. Your score will give you a starting point from which you can gauge your skill development. Work through each lesson, doing the activities as prescribed.

The keys to the exercises are included in this book so that you have immediate reinforcement for your practice. You will find the keys to the Skill Builder activities at the end of each lesson; however, the keys to the Skills

Workshop are located at the back of the book in **Keys to Assessments and Worksheets**.

Good luck on your journey to improving your writing skills. Practice makes progress: repetition is the key to learning any skill, including writing.
Now go for it!

Dona Young

February 11, 2008

To Charley, Rosie, and Robert Lee

The Mechanics of Writing

This handbook covers major principles that lead to correct writing.

BRIEF CONTENTS

	Introduction	i
	About This Book	vii
	Contents	ix
Chapter		
1	The Comma, the <i>Pause</i> , and the Plan	1
2	The Sentence	11
3	Conjunctions, Phrases, and Clauses	25
4	Comma Rules	39
5	Semicolon Rules	73
6	The Colon, the Dash, and the Ellipses	89
7	Capitalization and Number Usage	103
8	Quotation Marks, Apostrophes, and Hyphens	123
9	Similar Words and Spelling Tips	137
10	Editing Tips and Proofreading Practice	157
	Quick Reference to Similar Words	177
	Keys to Assessments and Worksheets	191
	Index	206
	About the Author	211

About This Book

The Mechanics of Writing was written for a specific purpose: to help writers at all levels—students and professionals alike—improve the quality of their writing.

The subtitle of this book, *Which Comes First, the Comma or the Pause?*, has a broader meaning than you might expect: the word *pause* not only refers to decisions about commas, *pause* also symbolizes an approach to making writing decisions. Rather than basing decisions on solid principles, writers instead base many of their decisions on guesses or whims. That is partly because looking up every question in a reference manual can be time-consuming.

If the pause approach has not worked for you, try the systematic approach to building skills that this book presents. You will learn principles on which to base common writing decisions. Then you will practice those principles, applying what you are learning while the concepts are fresh.

Unlike most handbooks, this book is meant to be read from cover to cover. That is because it untangles grammar, building from one concept to another. Though it covers the basics, it covers them in a fast-paced and highly focused way. In fact, thousands of business professionals have used this approach to improve their writing, producing higher-quality writing in less time and with greater confidence.

As you work through each lesson of this book, you will steadily improve your proofreading and editing skills. Eventually, many writing decisions will become automatic: you will no longer rely on guessing but rather will rely on solid principles that lead you to achieve a higher standard. As your writing skills improve, so will your career opportunities.

Note: The student Web site for this book, www.commasrule.com, contains additional practice exercises.

CONTENTS

	Introduction	i
	About This Book	v
	Brief Contents	vii
Lesson 1	The Comma, the <i>Pause</i>, and the Plan	1
	The Writing Process	2
	Writing Tools	3
	The Plan	4
	Recap	6
	Writing Workshop	7
	Skills Workshop	7
Lesson 2	The Sentence	11
	What Is a Sentence?	11
	What Is a Subject?	13
	What Is a Verb?	15
	What Is the Sentence Core?	17
	What Is a Compound Subject?	18
	What Is a Compound Verb?	19
	What Is a Compound Sentence?	19
	Recap	20
	Writing Workshop	21
	Skills Workshop	21

Lesson 3	Conjunctions, Phrases, and Clauses	25
	What Are Conjunctions?	25
	What Are Coordinating Conjunctions?	26
	What Are Subordinating Conjunctions?	27
	What Are Adverbial Conjunctions?	28
	What Is a Phrase?	30
	What Is a Fragment?	31
	How Do You Correct a Fragment?	32
	Recap	33
	Writing Workshop	34
	Skills Workshop	35

Lesson 4	Comma Rules	39
	Rule 1: The Sentence Core Rules	
	Rule 2: Conjunction (CONJ)	40
	Rule 3: Series (SER)	42
	Rule : Introductory (INTRO)	
	Rule 4: Nonrestrictive (NR)	56
	Rule 5: Parenthetical (PAR)	58
	Rule 6: Direct Address (DA)	61
	Rule 7: Appositive (AP)	62
	Rule 8: Addresses and Dates (AD)	64
	Rule 9: Word Omitted (WO)	66
	Rule 10: Direct Quotation (DQ)	67
	Rule 11: Contrasting Expression or Afterthought (CEA)	69
	Rule 12:	
	Recap	69
	Comma Rules	70
	Writing Workshop	71

Lesson 5	Semicolon Rules	73
	The Semicolon	74
	Rule 1: Semicolon No Conjunction (NC)	75
	Rule 2: Semicolon Bridge (BR)	76
	Rule 3: Semicolon Because of Comma (BC)	78
	The Colon	80
	The Dash	81
	The Ellipses	82
	Writing Style: Punctuation and Flow	83
	Recap	84
	Semicolon Rules	85
	Writing Workshop	85
	Editing Workshop	86
Lesson 6	The Colon, the Dash, and the Ellipses	89
	The Colon	89
	The Dash	93
	The Ellipses	95
	Recap	98
	Writing Workshop	99
	Skills Workshop	99
Lesson 7	Capitalization and Number Usage	103
	Capitalization	103
	Proper Nouns and Common Nouns	104
	Articles, Conjunctions, and Prepositions	105
	First Words	106
	Hyphenated Terms	106
	Organizational Titles and Terms	107

Two Common Capitalization Errors	108
Global Communication and the Rules	109
Number Usage	110
Dates and Time	113
Addresses and Phone Numbers	113
Recap	117
Writing Workshop	117
Skills Workshop	118

Lesson 8 Quotation Marks, Apostrophes, and Hyphens 123

Quotation Marks	123
Quotation Marks with Periods and Commas	124
Quotation Marks with Semicolons and Colons	124
Quotation Marks with Questions and Exclamations	125
Short Quotes and Long Quotes	125
Quotation within a Quotation	125
Apostrophes	126
Possessives	126
Inanimate Possessives	128
Hyphens	129
Word Division	130
Compound Modifiers	130
Numbers	131
Prefixes and Suffixes	131
Recap	133
Writing Workshop	133
Skills Workshop	134

Lesson 9 Similar Words and Spelling Tips 137

Pretest	138
Part A: Tricky Combos	139

Part B: Spelling Tips 147

Recap 149

Writing Workshop 149

Skills Workshop 150

Lesson 10 Editing Tips and Proofreading Practice 157

Quick Editing Tips 158

Contain Sentence Length 158

Control Sentence Structure 158

Use Real Subjects with Strong Verbs 159

Write in the Active Voice 160

Be Concise 161

Manage Information Flow 162

Modify Sparingly but Correctly 163

Use Simple Words 164

Avoid Outdated Expressions and Clichés 164

Avoid Split Infinitives

Applying Proofreading Skills 165

Recap 169

Writing Workshop 169

Skills Workshop 170

Quick Reference to Similar Words 177

Keys to Assessments and Worksheets 191

Index 205

About the Author 211

4

Comma Rules

Before learning how to use commas correctly, let's *clean the slate*, so to speak. In other words, to avoid using a comma for a whim or a pause, apply the following motto:

When in doubt, leave it out.

Your goal now is to use a comma *only* if you know the valid rule that applies to using it. Here is an overview of basic comma rules:

1. The sentence core rules: do not separate the subject and the verb of a sentence with only *one* comma.
2. **Conjunction**: put a comma before a coordinating conjunction, such as *and* or *but*, when it connects two independent clauses.
3. **Series**: put a comma between items in a series.
4. **Introductory**: put a comma after a word, phrase, or dependent clause that introduces an independent clause.
5. **Nonrestrictive**: use commas to set off words and phrases nonessential to the meaning of the sentence.
6. **Parenthetical Expression**: use commas to set off a word or expression that interrupts the flow of a sentence.
7. **Direct Address**: use commas to set off the name of a person addressed directly.
8. **Appositive**: use commas to set off the restatement of a noun or pronoun.
9. **Addresses and Dates**: use commas to set off the parts of addresses and dates.
10. **Words Omitted**: use a comma to indicate a word is omitted.
11. **Direct Quotation**: use commas to set off a direct quotation within a sentence.
12. **Contrasting Expression or Afterthought**: use commas to separate a contrasting expression or afterthought from the main clause.

Comma rules vary slightly from source to source. The rules presented here are consistent with other sources, but they may appear more detailed than some and less detailed than others. This approach is that it instructs you on how to use commas without going into detail about the exceptions, which can be confusing. If you find yourself writing a complicated sentence, consider simplifying your sentence by breaking down the information into more than one sentence. Simplicity is key to reader-friendly writing, which these comma rules help you achieve.

Rule 1: The Sentence Core Rules

Do not separate a subject and verb with only one comma.

Though this is somewhat of a rogue rule in that it does not indicate where you need to place a comma, this rule keeps you from making serious errors. As you already know, the sentence core is the critical point at which grammar and writing cross paths. The sentence core is the starting point of understanding grammar, and the sentence core is the most powerful element of any sentence.

As you work through these comma rules, you will find that setting off information with a pair of commas is acceptable. However, if you find yourself putting one comma between a subject and verb—take out the comma *or* see if a second comma is needed!

Now let's review the remainder of the 12 comma rules, all of which give you guidance on when you should use commas.

Rule 2: Conjunction (CONJ)

Put a comma before a coordinating conjunction, such as *and* or *but*, when it connects two independent clauses.

As you read the examples below, identify each independent clause (the subject of each clause is underlined once, and the verb twice, making the sentence core apparent at a glance):

Bill stayed late, *and* he worked on the proposal.

The book was left at the front desk, *but* George did not pick it up.

Be careful *not* to add a comma before a coordinating conjunction when only the second part of a compound verb follows it, for example:

Incorrect: Bob worked on the proposal, *and* sent it to my attorney.

Corrected: Bob worked on the proposal *and* sent it to my attorney.

However, make sure that you put a comma before coordinating conjunction when an independent clause precedes it and follows it, for example:

Incorrect: The idea to implement the project was good *so* we plan to start next week.

Corrected: The idea to implement the project was good, *so* we plan to start next week.

The sentence above marked “incorrect” is an example of a **run-on sentence**: *two or more sentences coming together without sufficient punctuation*. After working on the Skill Builder, you will learn another comma rule also based on the use of coordinating conjunctions, Rule 2: Comma Series.

Skill Builder

Rule 2: Conjunction (CONJ)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice, for example:

Incorrect: Jodie assisted with the last project so Christopher will help us with this one.

Corrected: Jodie assisted with the last project, so Christopher will help us with this one.

1. Mark Mallory is the new district manager and he starts on Monday.
2. Mark will be an inspiration to our staff and an excellent spokesperson for our product.
3. You can leave him a message but he will not be able to reply until next week.

4. The office in St. Louis also has a new manager and her name is Alicia Rivera.
5. Mail your information now and expect a reply within the next week.

Note: See page 69 for the answer key to the above sentences.

REVIEW POINT Always remember to identify the verb first and then the subject, which precedes the verb in statements. Also do not forget that at times a sentence will have an “understood” or “implied” subject, for example:

(You) Give your information to Lucile.

(I) Thank you for your help.

When you have difficulty identifying a subject that precedes the verb, ask yourself if the subject could be an implied subject such as *you understood* (You) or *I understood* (I).

Rule 3: Series (SER)

Put a comma between items in a series.

A series consists of at least three items, and you may have learned that the comma before the conjunction is not required. That is true. Although the comma before the conjunction *and* is not required, it is preferred, for example:

I brought potatoes, peas, *and* carrots to the pot luck.

The estate was left to Robert, Rose, Charles, *and* Sophie.

My favorite activities are walking, doing yoga, *and* swimming.

In the first example, would you prepare the “potatoes, peas, and carrots” separately or mixed? What if the comma were missing after *peas*, as in “potatoes, peas and carrots.” Would you prepare them separately or mixed?

In the second example, would the estate necessarily be split the same way if the comma after Charles were missing? For example:

The estate was left to Robert, Rose, Charles *and* Sophie.

In fact, the above sentence is open for debate. Some could argue that the estate should be split only three ways, with Charles and Sophie splitting a third. For clarity, separate each entity (or separate individual) with a comma.

Another mistake that writers make is to separate *only two items* with a comma, especially when the items are long phrases (shown in italics below):

Incorrect: The assistant provided *a series of examples*, and *a good recap of the meeting*.

Corrected: The assistant provided *a series of examples* and *a good recap of the meeting*.

After you complete the Skill Builder, you will work on Rule 3: Comma Introductory, a rule that involves subordinating and adverbial conjunctions.

Skill Builder

Rule 3: Series (SER)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice, for example:

Incorrect: Jerry asked for squash peas and carrots.

Corrected: Jerry asked for squash, peas, and carrots.

1. We were assigned Conference Rooms A and B on the first floor.

2. Make sure that you bring your laptop cell phone and client list to the meeting.
3. You should arrange the meeting call your manager and submit your proposal.
4. Mitchell Helen and Sally conducted the workshop on culinary science.
5. They gave a workshop for Elaine Arlene Donald and Joanne on preparing cutting and storing vegetables.

Note: See page 69 for the answer key to the above sentences.

REVIEW POINT As a refresher, here are the three types of conjunctions that play a role in punctuation, along with a few examples of each:

Coordinating conjunctions:	and, but, or, nor, so, yet
Subordinating conjunctions:	if, after, while, when, as, as soon as, although, because
Adverbial conjunctions:	however, therefore, thus, for example, in conclusion

Conjunctions also play a role in creating a reader-friendly writing style because they cue the reader to the meaning you are conveying.

Rule 4: Introductory (INTRO)

Put a comma after a *word, phrase, or dependent clause* that introduces an independent clause.

Since this rule is a bit complicated, let's break it down into the various parts: *word, phrase, and dependent clause*.

- **Word:** in general, *word* refers to an adverbial conjunction such as *therefore, however, and consequently*, among others.

However, I was not able to attend the conference.

Therefore, we will convene the meeting in Boston this year.

- **Phrase:** in general, *phrase* refers to a prepositional phrase, gerund phrase, or infinitive phrase.

During that time, he spoke about the plan in detail.

Leaving my bags at the airport, I took a taxi into the city.

To arrive earlier, Michael rearranged his entire schedule.

- **Dependent clause:** a dependent clause begins with a subordinating conjunction, such as *since*, *because*, *although*, *while*, *if*, and so on.

Although my calendar is full, we can meet this Friday morning.

Before you arrive at my office, (you) call my assistant.

Until I am available, you can use an extra office to work.

A common mistake is to place a comma after a subordinating conjunction, for example:

Incorrect: *Although*, the information is timely, we cannot use it.

Corrected: *Although* the information is timely, we cannot use it.

Place the comma after the dependent clause, *not* after the subordinating conjunction! After you complete the Skill Builder, you will learn that some commas come in sets, as with Rule 4: Comma Nonrestrictive.

Skill Builder

Rule 4: Introductory (INTRO)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice:

Incorrect: Although Mary flew to Boston she arrived a day late.

Corrected: Although Mary flew to Boston, she arrived late.

1. Because the letter arrived late we were not able to respond on time.
2. However we were given an extension.

3. Although the extra time helped us we still felt pressured for time.
4. To get another extension George called their office.
5. Fortunately the office manager was agreeable to our request.

Note: See page 69 for the answer key to the sentences above.

REVIEW POINT The subject and verb form the sentence core, the powerhouse of your sentence. Separating the subject and verb with *only one comma* creates a major grammatical error. (See Rule 12, pages 39-40.)

Do not separate a subject and verb with just one comma.

You will learn, however, that you can separate a subject and verb with a *set* of commas.

Rule 5: Nonrestrictive (NR)

Use commas to set off explanations that are nonessential to the meaning of the sentence.

The key to understanding this rule lies in the difference between the meaning of the words *restrictive* and *nonrestrictive*.

- **Restrictive information** is *essential* and should not be set off with commas.
- **Nonrestrictive information** is *not essential* and can be set off with commas.

Whenever you set off information between two commas, you are implying that the information can be removed without disturbing the structure or meaning of the sentence.

Nonrestrictive elements often come in the form of “who” or “which” clauses. Read the following two examples that illustrate this rule (*who* clauses are shown in italics):

Alice Walker, *who is a prestigious author*, will be the keynote speaker.

The woman *who is a prestigious author* will be the keynote speaker.

In the first example above, you would still know who the keynote speaker would be even if the *who* clause were removed:

Alice Walker will be the keynote speaker.

However, in the second example, the meaning of the sentence would be unclear if the *who* clause were removed:

The woman will be the keynote speaker. *Which woman?*

In fact, all commas that come in sets imply that the information set off by the commas can be removed; so here is another reminder of how to use commas with *essential* and *nonessential* elements:

- Essential information is restrictive and should not be set off with commas.
- Nonessential information is nonrestrictive and can be set off with commas.

Complete the following Skill Builder to test your understanding.

Skill Builder

Rule 5: Nonrestrictive (NR)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice. The essential and nonessential clauses are shown in italics, for example:

Incorrect: The artist *who designed our brochure* lives in New Orleans.

Corrected: The artist *who designed our brochure* lives in New Orleans. (no commas needed)

1. Our manager *who specializes in project grants* will assist you with this issue.
2. Tomas Phillips *who works only on weekends* will call you soon.
3. The paralegal *who researched this lawsuit* is not available.
4. Nick Richards *who is in a meeting until 3 p.m.* can answer your question.
5. Your new contract *which we mailed yesterday* should arrive by Friday.

Note: See page 70 for the answer key to the above sentences.

Rule 6: Parenthetical (PAR)

Use commas to set off a word or expression that interrupts the flow of a sentence.

This rule applies to adverbial conjunctions or other short phrases interjected into a sentence. By interrupting the flow of the sentence, a parenthetical expression places stress on the words immediately preceding it or following it. These elements should be set off with commas because they are nonessential and can be removed.

The following three examples show parenthetical expressions (shown in italics) set off with commas. Can you see how each could be removed, leaving the sentence complete and clear in meaning?

Mr. Connors, *however*, arrived after the opening ceremony.

You can, *therefore*, place your order after 5 p.m. today.

The project, *in my opinion*, needs improvement.

A common mistake occurs when a writer uses a semicolon in place of one of the commas, for example:

Incorrect: Ms. Philippe; in fact, approved the request last week.

Corrected: Ms. Philippe, in fact, approved the request last week.

Though a semicolon *can* precede an adverbial conjunction, that construction involves two sentences. In those cases, the adverbial conjunction functions as a bridge or a transition rather than an interrupter. (See Lesson 5: Semicolons)

Another common mistake occurs when a writer uses only one comma rather than a set of commas, for example:

Incorrect: Our sales representative, therefore will assist you at your convenience.

Corrected: Our sales representative, therefore, will assist you at your convenience.

Incorrect: Mr. Jones, however will plan this year's event.

Corrected: Mr. Jones, however, will plan this year's event.

Even though adverbial conjunctions are usually nonessential elements in terms of sentence structure, they play an important role in writing style. Adverbial conjunctions give vital clues to meaning, helping your reader identify key points. After working on the Skill Builder below, you will learn Rule 6: Direct Address.

Skill Builder

Rule 6: Parenthetical (PAR)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice:

Incorrect: Our contract however did not include charges for delivery.

Corrected: Our contract, however, did not include charges for delivery.

1. Customer service I believe can best assist you with this issue.
2. T. J. therefore will work this weekend in my place.
3. Our invoice unfortunately was submitted incorrectly.
4. The new contract in my opinion meets specifications.
5. Brown Company of course recommended us to a vendor.

Note: See page 70 for the answer key to the above sentences.

WRITING TIP *A Note about Style:* Comma Parenthetical Expression (PE) shows you the correct way to punctuate a sentence when an adverbial conjunction occurs in the middle of a sentence. However, you can often make your sentence more reader friendly by moving the adverbial conjunction to the beginning of the sentence, for example:

Therefore, our sales representative will assist you.

In fact, Mr. Philippe approved the request.

In my opinion, the project needs improvement.

In fact, writers often interject a comment such as “I believe” or “I think” at the beginning of a sentence. These types of expressions can generally be removed, improving the flow of the sentence and making the meaning clearer. Use parenthetical expressions only when they make your meaning clearer.

Rule 7: Direct Address (DA)

Use commas to set off the name or title of a person addressed directly.

Often the name of the person being addressed directly appears at the beginning of the sentence, but the name can also appear in the middle of the sentence or at the end of it, as shown below:

Donald, you can arrange the meeting in Dallas or Fort Worth.

I gave the invitation to everyone in the department, Marge.

Your instructions, Professor, were clear and to the point.

In each of the above examples, notice that the name of the person being addressed is *not* the subject of the sentence. The following sentences also contain a direct address, but the subject of each sentence is implied. As you read the sentences, ask yourself *who* is performing the action of the verb:

Thank you, Astrid, for speaking on my behalf.

Feel free to call my office at your convenience, David.

Traci, please assist me with the spring conference.

In the first sentence above, the implied subject is *I understood*; in the second and third, the implied subject is *you understood*:

I thank you, Astrid, for speaking on my behalf.

You feel free to call my office at your convenience, David.

Traci, you please assist me with the spring conference.

You will find that in sentences that contain a direct address, the subject is often implied.

Complete the Skill Builder below before moving on to Comma Rule 7: Comma Appositive.

Skill Builder

Rule 7: Direct Address (DA)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice:

Incorrect: Johnny you should study that problem in more depth.

Corrected: Johnny, you should study that problem in more depth.

1. Give your report to the auditor by Friday Marcel.
2. Jason do you have tickets for the game?
3. Doctor I would like to know the results of my tests.
4. Would you like to attend the banquet Alice?
5. Thank you for inviting me George.

Note: See page 70 for the answer key to the sentences above.

Rule 8: Appositive (AP)

Use commas to set off the restatement of a noun or pronoun.

With an appositive, an equivalency exists between the noun and its descriptor. In the examples below, the appositives are show in italics:

Carolyn, *my co-worker from Atlanta*, requested the date.

Mr. Johns, *the building commissioner*, refused to give us a permit.

To check to see if the descriptor is an appositive, ask yourself questions such as the following:

Who is Carolyn? My co-worker from Atlanta.

Who is my co-worker from Atlanta? Carolyn.

Who is Mr. Johns? The building commissioner.

Who is the building commissioner? Mr. Johns.

For an appositive that occurs in the middle of a sentence, using only one comma not only creates a mistake but also changes the meaning of the sentence. Notice how the following sentences differ in meaning:

Incorrect: Josef, my former boss gave me the information.

Corrected: Josef, my former boss, gave me the information.

In the first sentence above, the subject shifts to “boss” because of Rule 12 which states, “Do not separate a subject and verb with only one comma.” In other words, leaving out the comma after “Josef” changes the meaning of the sentence because grammar dictates that the real subject becomes “boss.”

Appositives are not always nonrestrictive; an appositive can be restrictive, which means that it is essential for clear meaning. For example, let’s say that you have five brothers and one of them is named Charles, who is joining you for dinner.

Appositive: My brother, Charles, will join us for dinner.

If you took “Charles” out of the above sentence, would the reader know which brother would join you for dinner? Because of the commas, the above sentence translates to: *My brother will join us for dinner*. Thus, for a restricted appositive, omit the commas, as follows:

Restricted Appositive: My brother Charles will join us for dinner.

A **restricted appositive**, as illustrated by the sentence above, should not be set off with commas. However, for now focus on identifying nonrestrictive appositives, which are far more common and are set off with commas.

Complete the Skill Builder below before going on to Rule 8: Addresses and Dates.

Skill Builder

Rule 8: Appositive (AP)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For extra practice, underline the subject once and the verb twice in each main clause, for example:

Incorrect: Elaine my cousin taught business education subjects.

Corrected: Elaine, my cousin, taught business education subjects.

1. Jacob Seinfeld our associate director decided to hire Williams.
2. My best friend Janet Sparacio applied for a job here.
3. Jim Martinez the registrar approved your request.
4. The department chair Dr. George Schmidt did not receive your transcript.
5. The director asked Clair my sister to join us for dinner.

Note: See page 70 for the answer key to the above sentences.

Rule 9: Addresses and Dates (AD)

Use commas to set off the parts of addresses and dates.

The term “set off” means that you put commas on both sides of the part of the address or date to show separation. For example, notice how the commas surround “Massachusetts” and “California” as well as “August 15”:

Boston, Massachusetts, is the best city to host the conference.

Sally has worked in Long Beach, California, for the past five years.

On Wednesday, August 15, my friends celebrated the Ferragosta.

Does it surprise you to learn that a comma is required *after* the state name when a city and state are written together? If so, you are not alone; the following mistake is common:

Incorrect: Dallas, Texas is a great city to start a new business.

Corrected: Dallas, Texas, is a great city to start a new business.

The same is true for dates, with the second comma in the set being incorrectly left off, as follows:

Incorrect: Jerome listed August 15, 2005 as his start date.

Corrected: Jerome listed August 15, 2005, as his start date.

Another type of error occurs when a writer puts a comma between the month and the day, for example:

Incorrect: September, 10, 2006 was the date on the application.

Corrected: September 10, 2006, was the date on the application.

Putting a comma between the month and the day (September, 10) *never* occurs! After you complete the Skill Builder for this rule, you will work on comma Rule 9: Words Omitted.

Skill Builder

Rule 9: Addresses and Dates (AD)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For extra practice, underline the subject once and the verb twice in each main clause, for example:

Incorrect: The conference is planned for August 19 2009 in Denver Colorado.

Corrected: The conference is planned for August 19, 2009, in Denver, Colorado.

1. Send your application by Friday December 15 to my assistant.
2. San Antonio Texas has a River Walk and Conference Center.
3. Would you prefer to meet in Myrtle Minnesota or Des Moines Iowa?

4. Springfield Massachusetts continues to be my selection.
5. We arrived in Chicago Illinois on May 22 2008 to prepare for the event.

Note: See page 71 for the answer key to the above sentences.

Rule 10: Word Omitted (WO)

Use a comma in place of a word that has been omitted when its omission affects the flow of the sentence.

This type of comma occurs less frequently than most of the others; most of the time, the word that has been omitted is either *that* or *and*.

The problem is *that* the current situation is quite grim.

The problem is, the current situation is quite grim.

Mr. Adams presented the long *and* boring report to the board.

Mr. Adams presented the long, boring report to the board.

Work on the Skill Builder before moving on to Rule 10: Comma Quotation.

Skill Builder

Rule 10: Word Omitted (WO)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. Underline the subject once and the verb twice for each main clause:

Incorrect: My suggestion is you should contain the situation now.

Corrected: My suggestion is, you should contain the situation now. (WO)

Corrected: My suggestion is *that* you should contain the situation now.

1. The president shared two intriguing confidential reports.
2. The photo shoot is on Tuesday at 5 p.m. on Wednesday at 6 p.m.

3. The problem is some of the results are not yet known.
4. Leave the materials with Alicia at the Westin with Marcia at the Hilton.
5. Silvana presented a short exciting PowerPoint on Italy.

Note: See page 71 for the answer key to the above sentences.

Rule 11: Direct Quotation (DQ)

Use commas to set off a direct quotation within a sentence.

A direct quotation is a person's exact words. In comparison, an indirect quotation does not give a speaker's exact words and would *not* be set off with commas.

Direct Quotation: Gabrielle said, "I have a 9 o'clock appointment," and then left abruptly.

Indirect Quotation: Gabrielle said that she had a 9 o'clock appointment and then left abruptly.

Direct Quotation: Dr. Gorman asked, "Is the environment experiencing global warming at a faster rate than previously predicted?"

Indirect Quotation: Dr. Gorman asked whether the environment is experiencing global warming at a faster rate than previously predicted.

An exception to this rule relates to short quotations: a short quotation built into the flow of a sentence does not need to be set off with commas.

Short Quotations: Marian shouted "Help!" as she slid on the ice.

My boss told me "Do not sweat the small stuff" before he let me go.

The advice "Give the project your best this time" sounded patronizing rather than encouraging.

In each of the direct quotations, whether set off with commas or blending with the flow of the sentence, the first word of the quotation is capitalized.

A note about quotation and punctuation placement:

- Commas and periods always go on the inside of quotation marks.
- Semicolons and colons always go on the outside of quotation marks.
- Exclamation marks and question marks are placed based on meaning and can go on the inside or outside of quotation marks.
- Never double punctuate at the end of a sentence.

You will learn about each of the above points in detail when you work on Lesson 8: Quotation Marks, Apostrophes, and Hyphens. Do the following Skill Builder before moving to your last substantial comma rule, Rule 11: Comma Contrasting Expression or Afterthought.

Skill Builder

Rule 11: Direct Quotation (DQ)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. Underline the subject once and the verb twice for each main clause.

Incorrect: Jeffery insisted go back to the beginning before you decide to give up!

Corrected: Jeffery insisted, “Go back to the beginning before you decide to give up!”

1. Patrick shouted get back! before we had a chance to see the falling debris.
2. According to Tyler all children can learn if they find an interest in what is taught.
3. My father warned me when you choose an insurance company, find one with good customer service.
4. Sharon encouraged me by yelling go for the gold as I was starting the race.
5. Lenny told me good luck on your exam before I left this morning.

Note: See page 71 for the answer key to the above sentences.

Rule 12: Contrasting Expression or Afterthought (CEA)

Use a comma to separate a contrasting expression or afterthought from the main clause.

A contrasting expression or afterthought adds an interesting twist to writing style. The expression at the end of the sentence certainly gets the reader's attention, for example:

Go ahead and put the property on the market, if you can.

I asked for the information so that I could process the sale, not to lose it.

My cousin Buddy, not my brother Chuck, drove me to the airport.

In fact, omitting the CEA comma is not a serious error; however, using the CEA comma makes your comments stand out and gives your writing a more conversational flow.

After you complete the Skill Builder below, complete the worksheets at the end of this lesson so that you get the practice that you need.

Skill Builder

Rule 12: Contrasting Expression or Afterthought (CEA)

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For extra practice, underline the subject once and the verb twice in each main clause, for example:

Incorrect: Elaine attended Southern State University not Northern State.

Corrected: Elaine attended Southern State University, not Northern State.

1. You will find the manuscript in John's office not in Bob's.
2. Marcus secured the contract but only after negotiating for hours.

3. Chair the budget committee if you prefer.
4. Lester rather than Dan received the award.
5. Work to achieve your dreams not to run away from your fears.

Note: See page 72 for the answer key to the above sentences.

Workshop Activity

Instructions: Work with a partner to complete the Skills Workshop. After you complete Worksheets 1, 2, 3, and 4, you will be ready to move on to Lesson 5: Semicolon Rules.

Recap

Knowing the basic comma rules will make a difference in the quality of your writing and your confidence. Commit yourself to completing the practice worksheets at the end of this lesson, following the directions exactly as prescribed.

As you complete each worksheet, the instructions direct you to place commas where needed as well as to identify the reason for each comma you use. Analyzing comma use in this way may seem challenging at first; however, this approach ensures that you will not only be correct but also be able to explain why.

The more you practice, the easier this task will become. And the good news is that you will learn commas in a way so that you will use them correctly and confidently for the rest of your writing career. *Now go for it!*

A summary of the comma rules that you have learned in this lesson appear on the following page.

Comma Rules

Rule 1: The Sentence Core Rules

Do not separate a subject and verb with only one comma.

Rule 2: Conjunction (CONJ)

Put a comma before a coordinating conjunction, such as *and* or *but*, when it connects two independent clauses.

Rule 3: Series (SER)

Put a comma between items in a series.

Rule 4: Introductory (INTRO)

Put a comma after a *word*, *phrase*, or *dependent clause* that introduces an independent clause.

Rule 5: Nonrestrictive (NR)

Use commas to set off nonessential words and phrases.

Rule 6: Parenthetical (PAR)

Use commas to set off a word or expression that interrupts the flow of a sentence.

Rule 7: Direct Address (DA)

Use commas to set off the name or title of a person addressed directly.

Rule 8: Appositive (AP)

Use commas to set off the restatement of a noun or pronoun.

Rule 9: Addresses and Dates (AD)

Use commas to set off the parts of addresses and dates.

Rule 10: Word Omitted (WO)

Use a comma to indicate a word is omitted when it affects the flow of the sentence.

Rule 11: Direct Quotation (DQ)

Use commas to set off direct quotations within a sentence.

Rule 12: Contrasting Expression or Afterthought (CEA)

Use a comma to separate a contrasting expression or afterthought.

Writing Workshop

Activity A. Writing Practice

Instructions: John Dewey once said, “We become what we learn.” Do you agree? How can you tell when you have learned something? How does it feel when you fail . . . or succeed? When you are motivated, do you work harder to learn?

Write a short paper entitled, “What Is Learning?” If you can, discuss the above questions with a peer before you start writing.

Activity B. Journal

Instructions: Identify three people to whom you have a message to convey. Write each of them a letter. You do not need to send them the letters, but you can if you wish. In fact, you may choose to write to someone who is no longer in your life. Finally, write a letter to yourself: give yourself a pat on the back for working so hard to achieve your goals. Also give yourself a few words of encouragement for the journey ahead. Remember, you can realize your dreams as long as you keep your heart and mind focused on achieving them.

Skills Workshop

As you complete the worksheets on the following pages, indicate the reason for each comma that you use. This additional step of analysis ensures that you will make conscious, educated decisions, bringing your skills to a higher level of expertise.

Analyzing comma use in this way may seem challenging in the beginning. However, this approach ensures that you will learn commas once and for all, a benefit throughout your writing career.

Note: You will find the keys to these exercises in the **Keys to Assessments and Worksheets** located at the back of this book.

Worksheet 1: Practice for the following comma rules:

- **Conjunction (CONJ)**
- **Series (SER)**
- **Direct Address (DA)**

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Also, indicate the name of the comma rule for each comma that you use, for example:

Incorrect: You assisted me with the project and I appreciated it.

Correct: You assisted me with the project, and I appreciated it. (CONJ)

1. I completed my report and Alice sent it to Wanda.
2. Wanda received the report but she did not yet file it with the department.
3. Thank you for letting me know about your concern Marsha.
4. Wanda will appreciate your telling her about the missing information for John Wilson Bill Jones and Mark Kramer.
5. Give Wanda the information today and you will save her some time.
6. The report often needs to be adjusted and Wanda kindly helps us with it.
7. Marsha you are wonderful to assist us with the extra work in our department.
8. You should first work on the monthly report schedules and inventory.
9. You can ask for additional time but you may not receive it.
10. The training room needs new chairs tables and flip charts.

11. Go to the mail room to get the catalog for ordering supplies Mallory.
12. The accounting department issues guidelines for expenses and someone in that department can assist you with your expense account.
13. Client lunches are included but you cannot get reimbursed for meals with friends family and co-workers.
14. File your expense account by the 15th of each month and you will receive your check by the 30th of the month.
15. Jorge thank you for following the policy as it is written.

Instructions: Now that you have had some practice, write two sentences demonstrating each of these rules:

- **Conjunction (CONJ)**

- **Series (SER)**

- **Direct Address (DA)**

Worksheet 2: Practice for the following comma rules:

- **Introductory (INTRO)**
- **Appositive (AP)**
- **Direct Address (DA)**

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Also, indicate the name of the comma rule for each comma that you use, for example:

Incorrect: If you are able to assist me I would be relieved.

Correct: If you are able to assist me, I would be relieved. (INTRO)

1. While I waited for a bus I was able to complete the report.
2. However the report may need some major revisions.
3. Give me your honest opinion Mike.
4. Mr. Sisco our new office manager will use the report to make important decisions.
5. If I had known how important the report would be I would not have agreed to do it.
6. However I felt pressured to agree to do it because everyone has too much work.
7. You can ask Susan our sales representative for a second opinion.
8. When I started this job I had no idea about the long work hours.
9. However I would have taken it anyway because of its wonderful opportunities.
10. After you work here for a while you will appreciate your fellow workers.
11. Mitchell could you help Helen with the new project?

12. If you cannot help Helen at this time you should not worry about it.
13. However check back with her periodically to see how the project is going.
14. Our new vice president Melissa Lorenz scheduled a meeting for this Friday afternoon.
15. Jamie check with Melissa to find out if the entire department needs to attend.

Instructions: Now that you have had some practice, write two sentences demonstrating each of these rules:

- **Introductory (INTRO)**

- **Appositive (AP)**

- **Direct Address (DA)**

Worksheet 3: Practice for the following comma rules:

- **Conjunction (CONJ)**
- **Addresses and Dates (AD)**
- **Nonrestrictive (NR)**
- **Parenthetical (PAR)**

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Also, indicate the name of the comma rule for each comma that you use, for example:

Incorrect: You are wonderful to help me and I will return the favor.

Correct: You are wonderful to help me, and I will return the favor.
(CONJ)

1. Mr. Gates started a computer company and Miller decided to invest in it.
2. Miller however did not realize the potential at that time.
3. The company which is quite successful has satellites around the world.
4. He revealed that March 27 2008 will be the official kick-off date.
5. Arrive on time to the interview and you will get off to a good start.
6. We have as a result chosen another vendor.
7. The time management seminar was excellent and its cost was reasonable.
8. Your paper unfortunately did not meet the standards.
9. Our management team assessed the damages and they recommended changes.
10. On September 5 2008 we will arrive in Denver Colorado for a meeting.
11. Leadership is a vital topic but no one seems to be addressing it.
12. Simone will however assist you with the project.

Worksheet 4: Practice for the following comma rules:

- **Introductory (INTRO)**
- **Series (SER)**
- **Words Omitted (WO)**
- **Contrasting Expression or Afterthought (CEA)**

Instructions: Place commas where needed in the following sentences. For each main clause, underline the subject once and the verb twice. Also, indicate the name of the comma rule for each comma that you use, for example:

Incorrect: You are invited to the kick-off event and can bring a friend if you wish.

Correct: You are invited to the kick-off event and can bring a friend, if you wish. (CEA)

1. If you choose to attend the event let us know by the end of the day.
2. Bring a guest to the luncheon if you prefer.
3. If you need extra tickets ask Elizabeth.
4. After the awards they will serve a meal of fish potatoes and broccoli.
5. Resume the program at the north branch not at the south branch.
6. Although the offer still stands our deadline quickly approaches.
7. Before they rescind their offer give them an answer.
8. After you review the contract let us know what you think.
9. The contract can be changed but only on our terms.
10. Your feedback should include items to add delete or change.
11. The fact is your input will assist us in many ways.
12. Begin the year with a detailed comprehensive plan.

Keys to Lesson 4 Skill Builders

Key to Rule 1: Conjunction (CONJ)

1. Mark Mallory is the new district manager, and he starts on Monday.
CONJ
2. Mark will be an inspiration to our staff and an excellent spokesperson for our product. (no commas)
3. You can leave him a message, but he will not be able to reply until next week. CONJ
4. The office in St. Louis also has a new manager, and her name is Alicia Rivera. CONJ
5. You can mail your information now and expect a reply within the next two weeks. (no commas)

Key to Rule 2: Series (SER)

1. We were assigned Conference Rooms A and B on the first floor. (no commas)
2. (You) Make sure that you bring your laptop, cell phone, and client list to the meeting. SER
3. You should arrange the meeting, call your manager, and submit your proposal. SER
4. Mitchell, Helen, and Sally conducted the workshop on culinary science. SER
5. They gave a workshop for Elaine, Arlene, Donald, and Joanne on preparing, cutting, and storing vegetables. SER

Key to Rule 3: Introductory (INTRO)

1. Because the letter arrived late, we were not able to respond on time. INTRO
2. However, we were given an extension. INTRO
3. Although the extra time helped us, we still felt pressured for time. INTRO
4. To get another extension, George called their office. INTRO
5. Fortunately, the office manager was agreeable to our request. INTRO

Key to Rule 4: Nonrestrictive (NR)

1. Our manager *who specializes in project grants* will assist you with this issue. (restrictive: no commas)
2. Tomas Phillips, *who works only on weekends*, will call you soon. NR
3. The paralegal *who researched this lawsuit* is not available. (restrictive: no commas)
4. Nick Richards, *who is in a meeting until 3 p.m.*, can answer your question. NR
5. Your new contract, *which we mailed yesterday*, should arrive by Friday. NR

Key to Rule 5: Parenthetical (PAR)

1. Customer service, I believe, can best assist you with this issue. PAR
2. T. J., therefore, will work this weekend in my place. PAR
3. Our invoice, too, was submitted incorrectly. PAR
4. The new contract, in my opinion, meets specifications. PAR
5. Brown Company, of course, recommended us to a vendor. PAR

Key to Rule 6: Direct Address (DA)

1. (You) Give your report to the auditor by Friday, Marcel. DA
2. Jason, do you have tickets for the game? DA
3. Doctor, I would like to know the results of my tests. DA
4. Would you like to attend the banquet, Alice? DA
5. (I) Thank you for inviting me, George. DA

Key to Rule 7: Appositive (AP)

1. Jacob Seinfeld, our associate director, decided to hire Williams. AP
2. My best friend, Janet Sparacio, applied for a job here. AP (or no commas)
3. Jim Martinez, the registrar, approved your request. AP
4. The department chair, Dr. George Schmidt, did not receive your transcript. AP
5. The director asked Claire, my sister, to join us for dinner. AP

Key to Rule 8: Addresses and Dates (AD)

1. (You) Send your application by Friday, December 15, to my assistant. AD
2. San Antonio, Texas, has a River Walk and Conference Center. AD
3. Would you prefer to meet in Myrtle, Minnesota, or Des Moines, Iowa? AD
4. Springfield, Massachusetts, continues to be my selection. AD
5. We arrived in Chicago, Illinois, on March 15, 2008, to prepare for the event. AD

Key to Rule 9: Word Omitted (WO)

1. The president shared two intriguing, confidential reports. WO
2. The crew scheduled filming on Tuesday at 5 p.m., on Wednesday at 6 p.m. WO
3. The problem is, some of the results are not yet known. WO
4. (You) Leave the materials with Alicia at the Westin, with Marcia at the Hilton. WO
5. Silvana presented a short, exciting PowerPoint on Italy. WO

Key to Rule 10: Direct Quotation (DQ)

1. Patrick shouted “Get back!” before we had a chance to see the falling debris. DQ
2. According to Tyler, “All children can learn if they find an interest in what is taught.” DQ
3. My father warned me, “When you choose an insurance company, find one with good customer service.” DQ
4. Sharon encouraged me by yelling “Go for the gold!” as I was starting the race. DQ
5. Lenny told me, “Good luck on your exam,” before I left this morning. DQ (or no commas)

Key to Rule 11: Contrasting Expression or Afterthought (CEA)

1. You will find the manuscript in John's office, not in Bob's. CEA
2. Marcus secured the contract, but only after negotiating for hours. CEA
3. (You) Chair the budget committee, if you prefer. CEA
4. Lester, rather than Dan, received the award. CEA
5. (You) Work to achieve your dreams, not to run away from your fears.
CEA

INDEX

A

a lot/alot, 178
accept/except, 177
access/excess, 177
active voice, 160
addresses (displaying), 113-114
addresses and dates (commas), 53, 68-69
adverbial conjunctions, 25, 28, 33, 44-45, 60
adverse/averse, 139, 179
advice/advise, 139, 177
affect/effect, 139, 177
all right/alright, 140, 178
all together/altogether, 178
among/between, 140, 178
amount/number, 179
appositive, 39, 52-53
apostrophes, 126
apprise/appraise, 140, 179
are/hour/our, 140, 179
assure/ensure/insure, 140, 179
articles, 105

B

base form (verb), p. 15
because of comma (semicolon), 74, 78-80
bake/break, 180
breath/breathe, 141
bridal/bridle, 180
bridge (semicolon), 74, 77-78
broach/brooch, 180
buy/by/bye, 180

C

cannon/canon, 180
canvas/canvass, 181
capital/capitol, 181
capitalization, 103, 117
 articles, 105
 conjunctions, 105
 first words, 106
 I (personal pronoun), 108
 illustrating lists, 92
 note or caution, 92
 organizational terms, 107

- proper nouns, 104
- titles, 107
- caution, 92
- cancel/censure, 181
- clichés, 164
- closed punctuation style, 124
- cancel/course, 181
- colon, 89
 - salutations, 90
 - sentences (following), 90
- comma rules, 39, 61
 - addresses and dates, 54-55
 - appositives, 52-53
 - conjunction,
 - contrasting information or afterthought, 59-60
 - direct address, 51-52
 - direct quotation, 57-58
 - introductory, 44-45
 - parenthetical expression, 62-63
 - series, 56-57
 - words omitted, 70-71
- complacent/complaisant, 181
- complement/compliment, 182
- complete subject, 13
- composing, 2
- compound sentence, 18
- compound modifiers, 130
- compound numbers, 131
- conciseness, 161
- conjunctions, 25, 33, 105
 - adverbial, 25, 33
 - coordinating, 26, 39-41, 60
 - subordinating, 25, 33
- continual/continuous, 182
- contractions, 128
- core/corps, 182
- could of/should of, 182
- council/counsel/182

D

- dash, 89, 93-94
- dates, 113
- dependent clause, 12, 27-28, 31
- desert/dessert, 183
- device/devise, 183
- direct address, 39, 51-52
- direct quotation, 39, 57-58

don't/doesn't, 141

E

editing, 2, 157

elicit/illicit, 183

ellipses, 89, 95-96

 quotations, 96

 spacing, 95-96

elude/illude, 183

every day/everyday, 141, 183

F

farther/further, 141, 184

faux/foe, 184

fragment, 13, 42

 correcting, 32

freewriting, 4

focused writing, 4

G

gaff/gaffe, 184

gerund, 15

 gerund phrase, 30-31

grammatical subject, 14

H

has/have, 141

heal/heel, 184

hoard/horde, 184

hyphens, 129

 compound modifiers, 130

 numbers, 131

 prefixes, 131

 suffixes, 131

hyphenated terms, 106-107

I

I (personal pronoun), 108

I understood subject, 14, 20, 42

independent clause, 12

infer/imply, 142

implied subject, 14, 42

infinitive, 15

 infinitive phrase, 30-31

 split, 165

information flow, 162-163

 old to new, 163

introductory (comma), 39, 44-45
its/it's, 142, 185

J

journal, 5, 7

L

lacks/lax, 185
linking verbs, 15
loan/lend, 142
loose/lose, 185

M

main clause, 12
may be/maybe, 142, 185
mind mapping, 3
miner/minor, 185
misplaced modifiers, 163

modify sparingly, 163

N

no conjunction (semicolon), 74, 75-76
nonrestrictive, 39, 46-47
note, 92
number usage, 110-112, 117
 fractions, 112
 indefinite numbers, 111
 mixed numbers, 112
 ordinal numbers, 111
 percentages, 112
 weights, 112

O

open punctuation style, 124
outdated expressions, 164

P

page mapping, 4
parallel construction, 31
parenthetical expression, 39, 48-49
passive voice, 160
passed/past, 186
personal/personnel, 186
phrase, 30
phone numbers, 113
possessives, 126
 inanimate possessives, 128

- plural possessives, 127
- singular possessives, 127
- prefixes, 148
- prepositional phrase, 30-31
- principal/principle, 143
- proofreading, 2, 257, 165

Q

- quotations, 57
 - direct, 57
 - indirect, 57
 - long, 125
 - punctuation with, 58
 - short, 57, 125
- quotation marks, 123
 - colons, 124
 - commas, 124
 - exclamations, 125
 - long quotes, 125
 - periods, 124
 - questions, 125
 - short quotes, 125

R

- rain/reign/rein, 186
- real subjects, 159
- restrictive, 46
- restricted appositive, 53
- review/revue, 186
- revising, 2
- roots (words), 147

S

- salutations, 90
- saw/seen, 143
- semicolon rules, 73
 - bridge, 74, 77-78
 - because of comma, 74, 78-80
 - no conjunction, 74, 75-76
- sentence, 11-12
 - compound sentence, 19
 - sentence length, 158
 - sentence structure, 158
- series (comma), 39, 42-43
- sight/site/cite, 143
- similar words, 177-190
- simple subject, 13
- some time/sometime, 187

state abbreviations, 115
stationary/stationery, 187
subject, 13
 complete subject, 13
 compound subject, 18
 grammatical subject, 14
 implied subject, 14, 42
 simple subject, 13
 understood subject, 42
 real subject, 159
subordinating conjunctions, 27, 44-45, 75
suffixes, 148-149
supposed to/used to, 143

T

than/then, 144, 187
their/there/they're, 144, 188
themselves/theirselves, 144, 188
through/threw/thorough/thru, 144, 188
time (representing), 113
try to/try and, 145
tone, 161-162
to/too, 144, 188

U

understood subject, 14, 20, 42

V

vain/vane/vein, 189
verb, 15
 base form, 15
 compound verbs, 18
 infinitive, 15
 linking, 15

W

ware/wear/where, 189
were/we're, 189
we're/were/where/wear, 145
who's/whose, 145, 189
words omitted (comma), 39, 70-71

Y

you/yous/y'all, 145, 190
you're/your, 145, 190
You understood subject, 14, 20, 42

About the Author

Dona Young is a teacher, facilitator, and writing coach. In addition to teaching writing at Indiana University Northwest, she also facilitates writing programs at major corporations.

Young holds a B.A. from Northern Illinois University and an M.A. from The University of Chicago. Young considers herself a lifelong learner, believing that who we become is a result of what we learn. Young is also the author the following books:

*Foundations of Business Communication:
An Integrative Approach*
McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2006

*Business English:
Writing for the Global Workplace*
McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008

*Which Comes First, the Comma or the Pause:
A Practical Guide to Writing,*
Writer's Toolkit Publishing, 2009

Writing from the Core: A Grammatical Writer
Writer's Toolkit Publishing, Summer 2009

ORDERING INFORMATION

Order your copy of *The Mechanics of Writing* from Amazon.com or bookstores everywhere. To receive a discount on bulk orders, contact the publisher directly at 877-933-0910 or www.wtkpublishing.com.

