

BASIC PUNCTUATION RULES

PUNCTUATION

PERIOD

We will leave for vacation in the morning.

QUESTION MARK

What is the homework for today?

EXCLAMATION MARK

I can't believe that I actually passed the test!

PERIOD AFTER AN ABBREVIATION

Dr. A.C. Barley is going to visit Mrs. T. Butler.

COMMA BETWEEN WORDS IN A SERIES

Israel, Charise, Megan, and Odette are related.

COMMA AFTER OPENING A FRIENDLY LETTER

Dear Mary, Dear Uncle George,

COMMA AFTER CLOSING A LETTER

Your best friend, Love, Sincerely,

COMMA BETWEEN DAY AND YEAR IN A DATE

June 4, 2004 December 25, 1971

COMMA BETWEEN CITY AND STATE

Alamo, Texas New York, NY

COMMA BEFORE A DIRECT QUOTATION

Kanea whispered, "I hope this is the right classroom."

APOSTROPHE IN POSSESSIVES

The dog's bone is over there by his doghouse.

APOSTROPHE IN CONTRACTIONS

Maria said that she couldn't come to my house right now.

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An English professor wrote the words :

"A woman without her man is nothing"

on the chalkboard and asked his students to punctuate it correctly.

All of the males in the class wrote:

"A woman, without her man, is nothing."

All the females in the class wrote:

"A woman: without her, man is nothing."

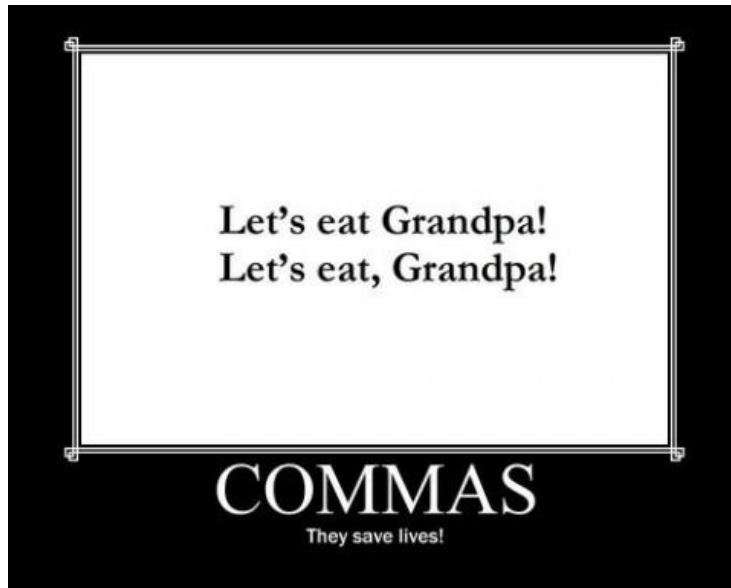
Punctuation is powerful

Rule 1: Enclose parenthetical expressions *(can be left out and the sentence still makes sense)* between commas.

- The best way to see a country, **unless you are pressed for time**, is to travel on foot.
- The audience, **which at first had been indifferent**, became more and more interested.
- Susan's husband, **Doctor Greene**, came to visit me yesterday.



2. Place a comma before a conjunction (*and, but, nor, for, so, yet*) introducing an independent clause (*a phrase/sentence that can stand alone; has a subject and a verb*).



- The situation is dangerous, **but** there is still one chance of escape.
- I have heard his arguments, **and** I am still unconvinced.

3. Do not join independent clauses by a comma; use a semicolon. You can still write them as two separate sentences, replacing the semicolon with periods.



- Will Ferrell's movies are entertaining; they are full of humorous events.
- Will Ferrell's movies are entertaining. They are full of humorous events.



****Exception to the rule: A comma is preferable when the clauses are very short and alike in form, or when the tone of the sentence is easy and conversational.**

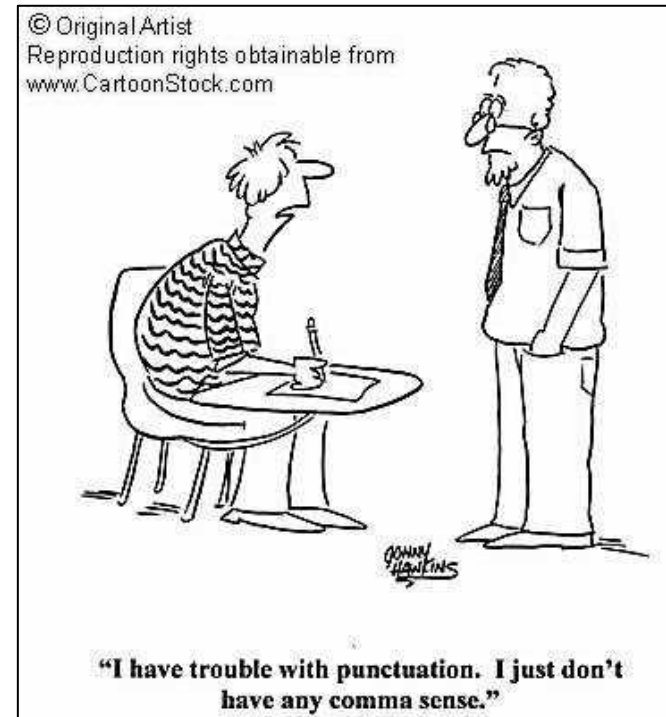
- The door swung open, the lights switched on, the eerie feeling came over me.
- Here today, gone tomorrow.



4. Do not break sentences into two; do not use periods for commas.

- I met them on a cruise ship years ago. Coming home from Panama to Los Angeles.
- He was an interesting talker. A man who had traveled all over the world and lived in half a dozen countries.

****In both these examples, the period should be replaced by a comma. Every sentence needs a subject and a verb.**



5. Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of items, an amplification, or a quotation.



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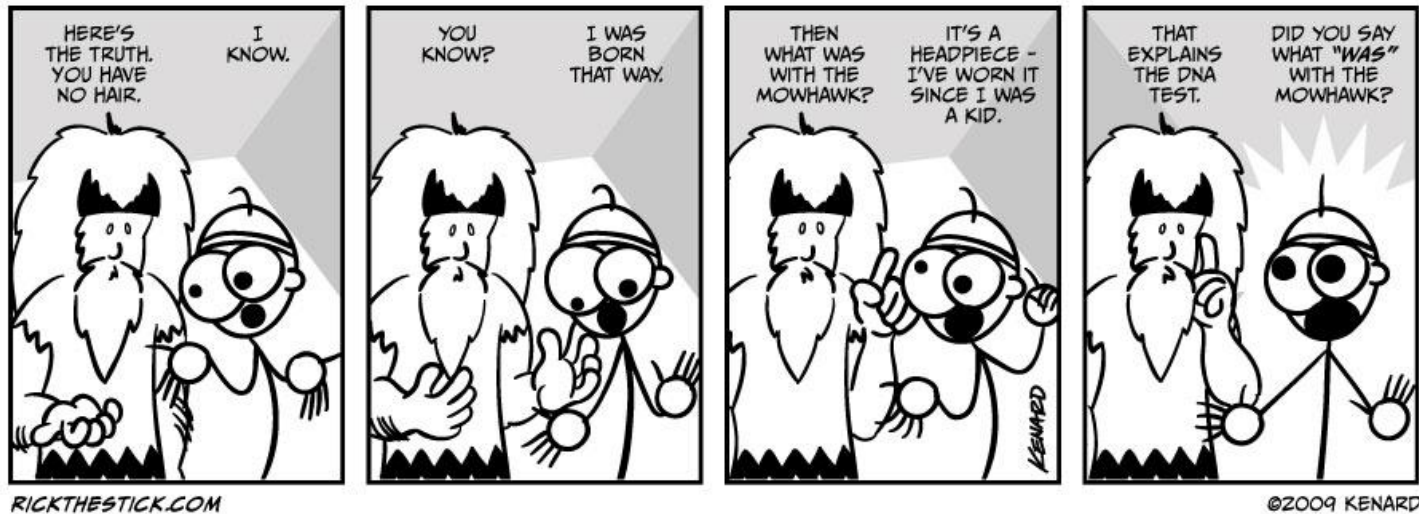
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"And always remember that it is the gritty colon itself,
not the half-baked semi-colon, that wields the power
to confound even the most erudite minds."

- Your dedicated whittler requires three props: a knife, a piece of wood, and a back porch.
- But even so, there was a directness and dispatch about animal burial: there was no stopover in the undertaker's foul parlor, no wreath or spray.
- The anger of the dancer reminded her from a line from *Dirty Dancing*: "Nobody puts Baby in the corner."



6. In summaries or anecdotes, keep to one tense.



- My brother decided it was time to get rid of the thing; it was old, rusty, and smelly. After days of searching, we discovered a used car dealer who would dispose of the vehicle in a discreet and humane manner: push it over a cliff.

7. Do not attempt to emphasize simple statements by using an exclamation mark. Reserve its use for true exclamations or commands.

- It was a wonderful show! =
It was a wonderful show.
- What a wonderful show!
- Halt!

