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COMMA SPLITS

You're about to learn about commas. A comma is a little piece of punctuation that tells us to pause when we read or speak or divide a sentence into more understandable parts. We really need commas! Take a look at this example:

I like peanut butter and jelly and mom and dad enjoy bacon lettuce and tomato.

Did it take you a try or two to figure out that sentence? Now try it with commas:

I like peanut butter and jelly, and mom and dad enjoy bacon, lettuce, and tomato.

Ahhh ... it's SO much easier to read!

There are rules that tell us where commas should go. There are also rules about where commas should not go! We'll start there first.

A COMMA SPLIT is when you put a comma where it doesn't belong. *Here is a list of places where a comma should not be:*

1. There should never be ONE comma between a SUBJECT and a VERB.

EXAMPLE: The dog, walked into the garage.

2. There should never be ONE comma between a VERB and ITS DIRECT OBJECT.

EXAMPLE: The man threw, the ball.

3. There should never be ONE comma between a LINKING VERB and ITS COMPLEMENT. (a complement is a predicate adjective or a predicate nominative)

EXAMPLE: The girl felt, wonderful! *or* That girl is, my sister.

4. There should never be ONE comma between a MODIFIER and ITS NOUN. (*the modifier right before the noun*)

EXAMPLE: The soft, blue, fluffy, sweater was beautiful.

5. There should never be ONE comma between a VERB and ITS INDIRECT OBJECT.

EXAMPLE: I wrote, my aunt a letter.

6. There shouldn't be ONE comma between an INDIRECT OBJECT and ITS DIRECT OBJECT.

EXAMPLE: I wrote my aunt, a letter.

(over)

In the comma rule exercises and tests, you'll need to refer to these comma split notes to help answer the questions. You'll start learning the comma rules right away, but it's also important for you to really understand the comma splits as well!

REMEMBER THE SIX DEADLY SPLITS!

1. *Subject and verb*
2. *Verb and direct object*
3. *Linking verb and complement*
4. *Modifier and its noun*
5. *Verb and indirect object*
6. *Indirect object and direct object*

Throughout this book you will have exercises in copy-editing. When you copy-edit, you correct mistakes you see in sentences. Sometimes you will add something where it is missing, remove something that should not be there, or change something that is incorrect.

There are certain symbols we use to copy-edit. As we move through this book, you will be taught the symbols you need to know.

Here are your first two symbols:

To add a comma - red  white, and blue

To remove a comma (or anything else in the future) - remove ~~this~~ 

COMMAS: ITEMS IN A SERIES

Each of our comma rules will have a "buzzword" that we'll use to refer to it. Our first rule is "items in a series."

ITEMS IN A SERIES: Use commas in between items in a list or series. These can be individual words or prepositional phrases, but the list should always be made of grammatical equals (all nouns, all verbs, all prepositional phrases, etc.) You will put a comma between each item and before the conjunction that will come before the last item.

EXAMPLES (*these are only a few examples, there are a lot of other ways to list things*):

Nouns - I brought my ball, bat, mitt, and hat to the baseball game.

Verbs - I walked, ran, hopped, and jumped to get my exercise in today.

Adjectives - She was tall, slim, and beautiful.

Prepositional phrases - We looked in the kitchen, around the dining room table, and on top of the fridge for the artwork my sister made.

Nouns and prepositional phrases - My chore list says to put the dishes in the dishwasher, the glasses in the cabinet, and the trash in the trashcan.

Verbs and prepositional phrases - Little red riding hood walked through the woods, skipped down the lane, and entered her grandmother's house.

NOTE: If all the items are separated by "and" or "or," do not use commas to separate them.

EXAMPLE: I bought a teddy bear and a necklace and a new shirt.

NOTE #2: The comma before the last item (usually before the conjunction) is sometimes called the auxiliary or Oxford comma. Some people are taught that it can be left out. Not us! You can confuse people by leaving it out, so we always include it.

EXAMPLE: On my desk I have pictures of my parents, Spot and Whiskers.

Are you giggling? I would be! It makes it seem that Spot and Whiskers are the speaker's parents. Now put the auxiliary comma in.

EXAMPLE: On my desk I have pictures of my parents, Spot, and Whiskers.

NOW I get it! Those are three separate pictures!

HERE'S A TRICK: If you read the sentences above out loud, just the way you'd say them in real life, your voice will pause right where the commas go. So if you have to put commas in a sentence where we've left the commas out on purpose, read the sentence out loud first, and your voice will tell you where they go!

The buzzword for this rule is "*items in a series.*"

ITEMS IN A SERIES: EXERCISE #1

NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go.

1. My brother mother sister and I went on a trip to the mall.
2. We had to find shoes for my brother a hat for my sister and a new skirt for me.
3. My brother found some tennis shoes that were red white and black.
4. I yelled screamed and waved my arms to get mom's attention.
5. Mom had to walk through the racks around a display and over to the corner to find me.
6. I found the perfect skirt made of denim cotton and eyelet.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

I asked, mom if she would buy me the skirt I needed. I needed wanted and desired that skirt! Mom looked at the beautiful, skirt on the hanger and told me to try it on. I went in the dressing room, closed the door and tried on the skirt.

ITEMS IN A SERIES: EXERCISE #2

NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go.

1. The skirt was twirly swirly and girly!
2. Mom said we could buy the skirt leave the store and look for a hat for my sister.
3. We went to the check out counter paid for the skirt and got our change.
4. We looked searched and finally discovered a hat store.
5. My sister needed a hat that she could wear at the beach the pool and the backyard.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

It's always, a good idea to wear a hat when you're out in the sun. The hat can be made of straw, or cotton, or polyester! What is important is that it protects you from the sun's UVA rays, UVB rays and heat. Protect, your face from the sun!

ITEMS IN A SERIES: EXERCISE #3

NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go.

1. My sister walked into the store up through the aisle and up to the counter.
2. She asked the clerk which hat would be best for the beach the backyard and the pool.
3. The clerk was helpful cheerful and knowledgeable.
4. We watched the clerk circle the store select hats and help my sister.
5. My sister was happy with her new hat for the beach pool and backyard.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

By this time mom was tired of, walking around the mall spending money. My sister brother and I told her how much we appreciated the shopping trip. Mom, smiled and said she was happy to take us. We kids were proud that we were well-behaved, appreciative and fun.

TEST: ITEMS IN A SERIES

NAME: _____

POINTS EARNED: _____ out of 15 LEVEL: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go.

1. It was time to head to the food court and eat eat and eat!
2. Mom and my sister wanted pizza my brother wanted chicken and I wanted a salad.
3. The pizza was covered in pepperoni mushrooms and olives.
4. My brother's system for dipping chicken was to use ketchup barbeque sauce and honey mustard.
5. My salad was artfully created with celery on the left tomatoes on the right and cheese in the middle.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

After we ate it was, time to head home. We pulled dragged, and pushed our packages to the car. Thank goodness there, was room in the trunk for it all! My mom, sister brother, and I talked all the way home. We had, a great time going to the mall as a family.

COMMAS: TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST"

The buzzword for this rule is "two adjectives 'and test.'"

TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST": You will SOMETIMES use a comma in between two or more adjectives that come before a noun. It's that "sometimes" that makes you nervous, right? How are you supposed to know when you need a comma between two adjectives and when you don't? That's where the "and test" comes in!

The "and test" works like this: If it sounds very natural to put the word "and" in between the adjectives, you need a comma. If "and" sounds funny at all, forget the comma.

EXAMPLE #1:

That is a lovely soft fuzzy sweater.

(... a lovely AND soft sweater? ... sounds good - you need a comma)

(... a soft AND fuzzy sweater? ... sounds good - you need a comma)

It should be: That is a lovely, soft, fuzzy sweater.

EXAMPLE #2:

I saw a little old man.

(... a little AND old man? ... sounds weird- forget the comma)

It should be: I saw a little old man.

TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST": EXERCISE #1

NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go. If the sentence is correct as written, just leave it blank.

1. My friends and I went to the enormous exciting playground near the library.
2. Sarah is my friend with the long black hair.
3. Johnny has freckles and his hair is the color of a ripe tasty carrot.
4. Naomi likes to wear denim overalls with bright colorful patches on the knees.
5. I have the most wonderful lively group of friends in the world.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

A good, old group of buddies is a wonderful thing. We like to hang out and, play with each other. We sometimes fight about, silly things. I suppose that happens in all groups of close, friends. We always make up and give each other a sincere heart-felt apology.

(over)

TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST": EXERCISE #2

NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go. If the sentence is correct as written, just leave it blank.

1. My friends and I had to decide what thrilling enjoyable thing to do first!
2. Bouncy joyful Sarah decided to start on the trampoline.
3. Calm cool collected Johnny chose the swings.
4. Crazy thrill-seeking Naomi wanted to try the super slide!
5. I wanted to do my loud obnoxious monkey impression on the monkey bars.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

We all decided it would be, fun to see who could do the most outrageous hilarious tricks. Sarah did flips, jumps and kicks on the trampoline. I hung from the monkey, bars with only one leg. Johnny, won by doing a huge flip off the end of the swing!

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence below there is a comma split. In the spaces below each sentence are the numbers of all the commas in the sentence. Find the comma split and write its number in the space at the left. Write what it is splitting beside that comma's number below the sentence. Next to the other numbers, write the buzzword of the comma rule for that comma.

_____ 1. We were, mad at Johnny for his dangerous, crazy stunt.
1 2

#1 _____

#2 _____

_____ 2. He, could have hurt his arm, leg, or head doing that trick!
1 2 3

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

_____ 3. Next time wild, foolish Johnny should do, a trick that is
1 2
hilarious and safe.

#1 _____

#2 _____

TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST": EXERCISE #3

NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go. If the sentence is correct as written, just leave it blank.

1. All of a sudden we felt a cool blustery wind.
2. You could see the grey billowy clouds coming toward us.
3. It had been such a bright shiny morning!
4. Could it really be a wet sloppy soaking rainstorm coming?
5. Then we jumped like frightened trembling mice when we heard the thunder give a tremendous booming crack!

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

Not one of us had, thought to bring an umbrella. We searched around the playground for a table, slide or board we could huddle under. There was one little, old picnic table off to the side. We crouched under those splintered stained, pieces of wood to keep dry.

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_____ 1. Dad must have seen, the windy, wet rainstorm coming.
1 2

#1 _____

#2 _____

_____ 2. We, saw my dad's car come around the corner, up the
1 2
driveway, and into the parking lot.
3

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

_____ 3. Four soaked, shivering kids climbed into dad's, car.
1 2

#1 _____

#2 _____

TEST: TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST"

NAME: _____

POINTS EARNED: _____ out of 26 LEVEL: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go. If the sentence is correct as written, just leave it blank.

1. Dad's huge shiny red car drove us to my house.
2. The rag-tag dripping kids ran up to the front door.
3. We were excited to see four cups of steaming hot chocolate!
4. We had towels around our shivering wet shoulders.
5. My friends and I gathered around the table in my warm comfortable kitchen.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

Sarah got us all laughing, giggling and snorting when she told us we looked like drowned, rats. We had warmed up and were now telling funny knee-slapping jokes to each other. Mom gave, us each a chewy gooey chocolate brownie to go with our hot chocolate.

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_____ 1. Now our tummies were filled, our clothes were dry, and
1 2
 our bodies were, warmed.
3

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

_____ 2. We, had a comical, strange, crazy day!
1 2 3

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

_____ 3. I am, lucky to have friends like Sarah, Johnny, and Naomi.
1 2 3

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NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go.

1. My brother,mother,sister,and I went on a trip to the mall.
2. We had to find shoes for my brother,a hat for my sister,and a new skirt for me.
3. My brother found some tennis shoes that were red,white,and black.
4. I yelled,screamed,and waved my arms to get mom's attention.
5. Mom had to walk through the racks,around a display,and over to the corner to find me.
6. I found the perfect skirt made of denim,cotton,and eyelet.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

I asked mom if she would buy me the skirt I needed. I needed wanted and desired that skirt! Mom looked at the beautiful skirt on the hanger and told me to try it on. I went in the dressing room, closed the door and tried on the skirt.

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WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go.

1. The skirt was twirly,swirly,and girly!
2. Mom said we could buy the skirt,leave the store,and look for a hat for my sister.
3. We went to the check out counter,paid for the skirt,and got our change.
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It's always,a good idea to wear a hat when you're out in the sun.
The hat can be made of straw,or cotton,or polyester! What is
important is that it protects you from the sun's UVA rays, UVB
rays,and heat. Protect,your face from the sun!

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TEST: ITEMS IN A SERIES

NAME: _____

POINTS EARNED: _____ out of 15 LEVEL: _____

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2
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2 and I wanted a salad.
- __ 3. The pizza was covered in pepperoni, mushrooms, and olives.
2
- __ 4. My brother's system for dipping chicken was to use ketchup,
2 barbeque sauce, and honey mustard.
- __ 5. My salad was artfully created with celery on the left,
2 tomatoes on the right, and cheese in the middle.

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 __ our packages to the car. Thank goodness there, was room in the trunk
 5 for it all! My mom, sister, brother, and I talked all the way home. We
 had, a great time going to the mall as a family.

Points Range		Level
15 - 14	=	Mastery
13 - 12	=	Superiority
11 - 10	=	Competency
9 - 8	=	Probationary
7 and below	=	Repeat

COMMAS: TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST"

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(... a lovely AND soft sweater? ... sounds good - you need a comma)

(... a soft AND fuzzy sweater? ... sounds good - you need a comma)

It should be: That is a lovely, soft, fuzzy sweater.

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I saw a little old man.

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NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go. If the sentence is correct as written, just leave it blank.

1. My friends and I went to the enormous,exciting playground near the library.
2. Sarah is my friend with the long black hair.
3. Johnny has freckles and his hair is the color of a ripe,tasty carrot.
4. Naomi likes to wear denim overalls with bright,colorful patches on the knees.
5. I have the most wonderful,lively group of friends in the world.

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A good,old group of buddies is a wonderful thing. We like to hang out and,play with each other. We sometimes fight about,silly things. I suppose that happens in all groups of close, friends. We always make up and give each other a sincere,heart-felt apology.

(over)

TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST": EXERCISE #2

NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go. If the sentence is correct as written, just leave it blank.

1. My friends and I had to decide what thrilling, enjoyable thing to do first!
2. Bouncy, joyful Sarah decided to start on the trampoline.
3. Calm, cool, collected Johnny chose the swings.
4. Crazy, thrill-seeking Naomi wanted to try the super slide!
5. I wanted to do my loud, obnoxious monkey impression on the monkey bars.

WHAT TO DO: Copy-edit the errors in the following sentences. There are five errors.

We all decided it would be fun to see who could do the most outrageous, hilarious tricks. Sarah did flips, jumps, and kicks on the trampoline. I hung from the monkey bars with only one leg. Johnny won by doing a huge flip off the end of the swing!

(over)

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 1

1. We were, mad at Johnny for his dangerous, crazy stunt.
 1 2

#1 *splits linking verb and complement*

#2 *two adjectives "and test"*

 1

2. He, could have hurt his arm, leg, or head doing that trick!
 1 2 3

#1 *splits subject and verb*

#2 *items in a series*

#3 *items in a series*

 2

3. Next time wild, foolish Johnny should do, a trick that is
 1 2
 hilarious and safe.

#1 *two adjectives "and test"*

#2 *splits verb and direct object*

TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST": EXERCISE #3

NAME: _____

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence, insert the commas where they should go. If the sentence is correct as written, just leave it blank.

1. All of a sudden we felt a cool,blustery wind.
2. You could see the grey billowy clouds coming toward us.
3. It had been such a bright,shiny morning!
4. Could it really be a wet,sloppy,soaking rainstorm coming?
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(over)

TEST: TWO ADJECTIVES "AND TEST"

NAME: _____

POINTS EARNED: _____ out of 26 LEVEL: _____

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2

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1

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1
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5 funny, knee-slapping jokes to each other. Mom gave us each a
chewy, gooey chocolate brownie to go with our hot chocolate.

WHAT TO DO: In each sentence below there is a comma split. In the spaces below each sentence are the numbers of all the commas in the sentence. Find the comma split and write its number in the space at the left. Write what it is splitting beside that comma's number below the sentence. Next to the other numbers, write the buzzword of the comma rule for that comma.

3

2

1. Now our tummies were filled, our clothes were dry, and
1 2
 our bodies were, warmed.
3

#1

1

#2

1

#3

1

items in a series
items in a series
splits linking verb and complement

1

2

2. We, had a comical, strange, crazy day!
1 2 3

#1

1

#2

1

#3

1

splits subject and verb
two adjectives "and test"
two adjectives "and test"

1

2

3. I am, lucky to have friends like Sarah, Johnny, and Naomi.
1 2 3

#1

1

#2

1

#3

1

splits linking verb and complement
items in a series
items in a series

Points Range	Level
26 - 23	= Mastery
22 - 21	= Superiority
20 - 18	= Competency
17 - 16	= Probationary
15 and below	= Repeat