**PUNCTUATION MARKS**

**The Use of the Comma**

The comma is a punctuation mark used to indicate a slight division between different parts of a sentence, or to indicate a small break in the sense of continuity within a sentence. It indicates a break that is less definite than that shown by a full stop or a semicolon. The writer must supply, as well as he can with marks of punctuation, what the speaker does naturally with his stops and pauses and with his voice variations.

Use commas:

**1°-** To separate main clauses joined by co-ordinating conjunctions such as ***for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.*** *(fanboys)*

**E.g**. Justice stands upon power, or there is no justice.

- If the two clauses share the same subject, no comma is needed.

**E.g**. *Hilary left home early and reached the station in time*.

- When the main clauses are short, the comma is frequently omitted.

**E.g.** *The wind shifted and the thaw began*.

**2°-** To separate the items of a list. The items in series can be words, phrases or clauses.

**-Words**:

**E.g.** *The room is bright, clean, quiet and fresh.*

**E.g.** *He packed his socks, shirts, underwear and brushes*.

- No comma is used before the final item in a list if a conjunction such as and is used.

**E.g.** *He packed his socks, shirts and underwear*.

- **Phrases**:

**E.g.** *He walked up the stairs, across the corridor, through the doorway and run away.*

- **Clauses:**

**E.g.** *We protested that the engine used too much oil, that the brakes were worn out, and that the tires were dangerous*.

**3°-** To separate a subordinate clause when it is followed by a main clause.

**E.g.** *When the train arrived, it was ten minutes late*.

**-** If the main clause comes first, no comma is required.

**E.g.** *The train was ten minutes late when it arrived*.

- When the clauses are short, the comma is optional.

**E.g.** *If we leave he will be offended*.

**4°-** To separate a long introductory phrase from the rest of the sentence.

**E.g.** *At the critical moment in this sad story, there has been some misunderstanding between the participants.*

**5°-** Introductory phrases containing a gerund, a participle or an infinitive, even though short, must be followed by a comma.

**E.g.** *Before leaving, she promised to come back soon.*

**6°-** To separate transitional expressions or connectives from the rest of the sentence. (too, however, nevertheless, of course, though, then, moreover, for example, in addition to, besides, hence, thus, for instance etc.)

**E.g.** *You can, however, do it if you wish*.

**E.g.** *In fact, I hope I leave as soon as possible*.

**7°-** To separate phrases in apposition from the rest of the sentence.

**E.g.** *Mr Sellal, the Prime Minister, promised a substantial increase of the salary.*

**8°**- Use a comma to set off parenthetical elements. By "parenthetical element," we mean a part of a sentence that can be removed without changing the essential meaning of that sentence

**E.g**.: *The Founders Bridge, which spans the Connecticut River, is falling down."*

**9°-** To separate quoted material from the rest of the sentence that explains or introduces the quotation:

**E.g.:** Summing up this argument, Peter Coveney writes, "The purpose and strength of the romantic image of the child had been above all.”

**10°-** To set off phrases that express contrast.

**E.g.:** Some say the world will end in ice, not fire.

**E.g.:** It was her money, not her charm or personality, that first attracted him

**11°-** To set off words and expressions like: Yes, No, Please, etc.

**E.g.:** Could you, please, let me know when you leave the office? Yes, I’ll do.

**12°**- To set off words in direct address.

**E.g.:** I hope, Ladies and Gentlemen, you join me next week for the final meeting.

**13°-** To set off all geographical names, items in dates (except the month and day), addresses.

**E.g.:** Birmingham**,** Alabama, gets its name from Birmingham**,** England.

**E.g.:** July 22, 1959**,** was a momentous day in his life.

**E.g.:** Who lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue**,** Washington, DC?

**Exercise: Use commas where necessary.**

1. Joey ate all of his peas but he refused to eat his white beans.
2. Edgar Allan Poe the father of the short story is buried in Baltimore.
3. Since the expansion of the Internet research has become much less tedious.
4. To maintain excellent grades in your classes is an accomplishment.
5. That movie in my opinion was too scary for children.
6. You will come to my dance recital won't you?
7. As cucumbers grow their vines need room to expand.

**The Use of the Semicolon**

Learning the following rules will help you use the semicolon correctly.

**1°-** Use a semicolon between independent clauses when they are not joined by the coordinating conjunctions **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.**.

**E.g.** *Ask for directions at the gate; a guide is stationed there*.

**2°-** Use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by such connectives as **furthermore, moreover, for example, for instance, nevertheless, otherwise, that is, besides, therefore, accordingly, however, also, consequently, hence, still, thus.**

**E.g.** *Electronics is changing the habits of many people; for example, television viewing is becoming popular throughout the world.*

**E.g.** *The book was sold out in every bookstore ; moreover, the library copies had disappeared*.

**3°-** Use a semicolon between independent clauses if there are commas within the clauses.

**E.g.** *When celebrating her twentieth birthday, the first present she opened was a box of handkerchiefs; and the second was a box of chocolates.*

**4°-** Use a semicolon between items in series if the items contain internal commas.

**E.g.** *Three men were elected to the board of directors: Arthur Crane, an insurance executive ; George Blake, the owner of a manufacture ; and Fred Taylor, the manager of a store chain.*

**Exercise 1:** *Use semicolons where necessary.*

**1°)** Hot summer weather is nice it can be dangerous for various groups of people when certain temperatures get too high.

**2°)** Driving the car is fast and comfortable, riding the bicycle is better for one's health.

**3°)** Most students attend a learning skills class, then their grades and skills improve.

**4°)** The air conditioner is too loud, Cleo can't sleep.

**5°)** Great minds think alike fools seldom differ.

**6°)** When the Professor came down the hall, the students hid in the stairway they didn’t want to be seen.

**7°)** The celebration was cancelled however when he discovered the cheque had been sent to the wrong address.

**Exercise 2:** *Punctuate the following sentences using commas wherever needed*.

1°) People have to beg borrow or steal a ticket for Saturday’s game.

2°) The chair person rapped on the table and the audience quieted down.

3°) Seeing nothing ahead of her on the road Sonia increased her speed.

4°) Although he shouted the name the traffic noise kept us from hearing it.

5°) The committee met at three and adjourned at four.

6°) Bruce ordered grapefruit coffee with sugar and ham and eggs.

7°) Luxor a city on the banks of the Nile was our next stop.

8°) Smoking is dangerous in the woods it may result in a forest fire.

9°) The travel agency the first one to open in our city offered special tours to Europe Latin America and the Far East and within three weeks over 200 people including students and adults had bought tickets.

10°) His Islamic contributions express a profound humanism Mohamed emphasised the dignity of man and viewed the whole of humanity as a single nation

**Exercise 2**: Compare the following passages and see how punctuation marks alter the meaning of a sentence:

Dear John:  
I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy--will you let me be yours?

Jane

Dear John:  
I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be?  
Yours,  
Jane

Let's eat, Grandpa.  
Let's eat Grandpa

- “We are learning about the panda. It eats shoots and leaves."

- "We are learning about the panda. It eats, shoots and leaves."

"Woman, without her, man is nothing." Vs. "Woman without her man, is nothing."

- I spoke to the boys, Sam, and Tom.

- I spoke to the boys, Sam and Tom.