Study Guide

Commas in a compound sentence
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**Commas: Compound Sentence**A comma is a punctuation mark used to set apart ideas or segments of meaning. They are also used to set off dates, addresses, and parts of a letter. At this level, commas are used within compound sentences.

Example of the use of a comma in a compound sentence:
I cannot believe you would cheat on the exam, yet I have never known you to be a perfectly honest person.

In a compound sentence, a comma is used to separate clauses. A clause is a group of related words containing a subject and a verb. Two types of clauses exist— main clauses and subordinate clauses. Main clauses express a complete thought. Subordinate clauses cannot stand alone. The following are all clauses:

-I prefer rye bread (main clause)
-that is landing in the afternoon (subordinate clause)
-Open the window (main clause)
-when you lock the kitchen door (subordinate clause)

In a compound sentence, two main clauses are connected by a coordinating conjunction. Coordinating conjunctions include: *for, nor, and, but, or, yet,* and *so*.

Examples of commas used to separate main clauses in a compound sentence:

1. Aunt Ida lost her car keys, and she cannot remember where she left a spare set.
2. Khalil ran quickly, but he still could not catch the thief.
3. Paris brushes her hair, and then she brushes her teeth.

**Practice:**

It would be helpful to practice adding commas to compound sentences with the student. To do this, find sentences from his or her school books, reading materials, newspapers, or magazines. Give the student a list of compound sentences with the comma removed. Have the student remember that *the comma in a compound sentence usually comes before the coordinating conjunction*. By having the student memorize the definition of a main clause, as well as the list of coordinating conjunctions, he or she can master adding commas to a compound sentence.

Below are some sample sentences for the student to begin his or her practice.

1. Marjorie could not tell her mother a lie for she was a very honest person.
2. Arlene Rosado invited ten people to her party and she even included her favorite teacher.
3. Mikhail does not like celery nor does he like carrots.
4. I would attend your party but I just can't find anything nice to wear.
5. You should either wear your blue jacket or you should wear your red vest.
6. I cannot seem to make a decision for either choice could result in a disaster.
7. I am arriving at North Station this afternoon so you should wait for me by the clock tower.