

COMMAS

We use comma in numerous ways, including:

- 1) Elements in a series
- 2) Comma plus coordinating conjunction
- 3) Introductory elements
- 4) Non-defining clauses
- 5) Other uses – quotation, avoiding confusion, etc.

Sentence vs. clause

Sentence is usually a text separated by a full stop, exclamation mark or a question mark.

Clause is usually a group of words containing a subject and a verb.

Professor Thompson, who used to work for the President, is currently the head of this faculty.

a) Independent clauses

- Can stand on their own and still make sense
 - o *Johnson didn't feel like going to work, but he went to work anyway.*

b) Dependent clause

- Do not make sense when standing on their own. Must be combined with an independent clause to work.
 - o *When you finish doing the dishes, you can play your video games.*
 - o *The machine, which was just recently purchased, developed a mind of its own.*

Independent clauses

- Often connected by a **coordinating conjunction**: *For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So* = **FANBOYS**
- Almost always accompanied by a comma! BUT sometimes not needed:
 - o *Johnson didn't feel like going to work, but he went to work anyway.*
 - o *Johnson was ill but he still came to work.*

Dependent clauses

- Often connected by **subordinating conjunctions**: after, although, before, even though, if, once, rather than, so that, until, whenever...
 - o Although Květa thought about joining the army, she never discussed it with anyone.
 - o Květa never discussed her wish to join the army, because she was afraid people would ridicule her.
- Cannot stand by themselves because they do not make sense.
 - o Adverb clauses: *When the show is over, we can go for a drink.*
 - o Adjective clauses: *My sister, who is an engineer, helped me a lot.*
 - o Noun clauses: *What he knows [subject] is no concern of mine.*

Sometimes, however, we may have to omit a comma to make our statement clear!

He didn't run, because he was afraid.

He didn't run because he was afraid. He ran because a giant tarantula just ate a "šalina."

Avoiding confusion

- For most the year is already finished.
- For most, the year is already finished.
- Outside the lawn was cluttered with hundreds of broken branches.
- Outside, the lawn was cluttered with hundreds of broken branches.

Exercise 1: Insert commas where necessary.

- 1) After a hard day at the office I like to relax with a large gin.
- 2) The recipe needed jam flour sugar fruit eggs ketchup and baking powder.
- 3) "Look at this" he whispered.
- 4) Paulina his wife of many years had decided to go and live in Greece.
- 5) As the sun began to sink over the sea Karen got ready to go out.
- 6) The thief was wearing impractical high heels so she could not run fast.
- 7) The thief who was wearing impractical high heels could not run fast.
- 8) We go to Blackpool for the cuisine not the weather.
- 9) Their son Steven was their only child.
- 10) Steven his head still spinning walked out of the office for the last time.

Exercise 2: The following sentences are extremely confusing. Insert commas to avoid confusion.

- 1) Before leaving the soldiers demolished the fort.
- 2) As she was rising to speak her mind suddenly played a cruel trick and she forgot her speech.
- 3) Shelley having drowned Byron presided over the funeral ceremonies on the beach.
- 4) Did the lion eat Fred?
- 5) Let's eat grandpa.

FAKE NEWS

- 1) Look at the following news titles. Can you recognize which ones are true and which are fake?

"Pope Francis shocks world, endorses Donald Trump for president"

"FBI agent suspected in Hillary email leaks found dead in apartment in murder-suicide"

"Thousands of fraudulent ballots for Clinton uncovered"

"Donald Trump once claimed climate change was a hoax created by China"

Adapted from: Capital Community College. <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/>

"Commas." *The Chicago Manual of Style Online*. 2010. The University of Chicago.

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Commas/>

“Denzel Washington backed President-elect Trump, saying: ‘he has hired more employees, more people, than anyone I know in the world.’”

“Melania Trump’s girl-on-girl photos from racy shoot revealed”

“Germany Folds to Shariah Law, Approves Child Marriages”

2) How do you define a fake news story? How do they spread? Write down your notes, then talk for one minute to a partner.

3) Go quickly through the following notes from three articles on fake news stories.

Students Have ‘Dismaying’ Inability To Tell Fake News From Real, Study Finds. By Camila Domonoske. *NPR*. 23 Nov. 2016. *NPR*.

- research shows students cannot distinguish fake news from real news
- professional appearance and a polished “about” section convince readers that the site is neutral, authoritative
- sponsored content is often mistaken for actual articles
- students only rarely verify information
- classrooms haven’t caught up with the way information is distributed -> students should learn how to read like fact checkers

It’s time to get rid of the Facebook “news feed,” because it’s not news. By Annalee Newits. *Ars Technica*. 19 Nov. 2016. *WIRED Media Group*.

- difficult to prove Facebook affected the results, but it is a symptom of a problem: is FB a fun platform or a social sharing site? Cannot have two completely different functions and be balanced at the same time.
- FB “news feed” is a part of the problem – sources you comment on or like are shown more frequently than those you do not comment on; other links in news feed are offered based on the information in your profile
- the purpose of FB is to sell you ads; this is done through news feeds, hence fake news sources masking as reliable news outlets problematic
- originally, regular news outlets were present in the news feed, humans checked them; once humans were replaced by an algorithm, fake news stories soon reached millions of “likes”
- current news feed puts same weight to personal opinions as to reliable news outlets

Facebook fake-news writer: ‘I think Donald Trump is in the White House because of me.’ By Caitlin Dewey. *The Washington Post*. 17 Nov. 2016. *The Washington Post*.

- FB fake news writer Paul Horner has been writing fake news and hoaxes for several years
- recently, his posts have been appearing in Google and often cited by public figures and politicians
- wanted to damage Trump campaign, but probably helped it instead
- “Honestly, people are definitely dumber. They just keep passing stuff around. Nobody fact-checks anything anymore – I mean, that’s how Trump got elected”

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