

Common Comma Errors

1. RULE #1: When you have two independent clauses (sentences) joined together with a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so), you must have a comma preceding the conjunction.

Errors that result from breaking this rule:

- a. Comma Splice: Joining two independent clauses together with just a comma.
- b. Run-on: Joining two independent clauses together with just a coordinating conjunction.

Comma Splice: I love to swim, I hate shopping for swimming suits.

Run-On: I love to swim but I hate shopping for swimming suits.

Correct: I love to swim, but I hate shopping for swimming suits.

2. RULE #2: When you have a dependent clause, a phrase, or a single-word modifier **before** your independent clause, it needs to be set off with a comma.

- a. Introductory Element Error: Having an introductory element before your main sentence without a comma separating them.

Dependent Clause Introductory Element Error: If they want to win athletes_x must exercise every day.

Single-Word Modifier Introductory Element Error: Surprisingly_x the roof was still intact.

Phrase Introductory Element Error: To stay in shape for competition_x athletes must exercise every day.

The comma should go where I placed an x.

3. RULE #3: There are only three ways to join two or more independent clauses together in the same sentence. (1) A comma and a coordinating conjunction, (2) a semicolon, or (3) a colon—this one is only used when the two sentences have a certain type of relationship.

- a. Fused Sentence: Joining two independent clauses together without any separation.

Fused Sentence: I love playing basketball it is fun.

Correct #1: I love playing basketball, for it is fun.

Correct #2: I love playing basketball; it is fun.

NOTE: You can also fix the error by making one of the clauses dependent. Or you can make them two separate sentences.

I love playing basketball because it is fun.

PRACTICE THE CONCEPTS:

Label the error and fix the following sentences: (1 sentence does not contain an error)

1. While playing basketball I sprained my leg.
2. I sprained my leg while playing basketball.
3. Playing games is so much fun I do it all the time.
4. If Ms. Madsen lets us work in groups we all have to do the work.
5. My classes were so good today, I think I am getting better at this.
6. He is crazy but I still enjoy hanging out with him.
7. I want to go to lunch I am so hungry.
8. I am excited for the weekend, I have a lot to do.
9. Christmas is over but I am still enjoying all the gifts.
10. He went to New Jersey and I miss him a lot.

Answer Key:

1. While playing basketball, I sprained my leg.
2. I sprained my leg while playing basketball.
3. Playing games is so much fun. I do it all the time. **(or a semi-colon, or a comma with a coordinating conjunction)**
4. If Ms. Madsen lets us work in groups, we all have to do the work.
5. My classes were so good today, **so** I think I am getting better at this. **(or just make the comma a period or semi-colon).**
6. He is crazy, but I still enjoy hanging out with him.
7. I want to go to lunch; I am so hungry. **(or a period, or a comma with a coordinating conjunction)**
8. I am excited for the weekend. I have a lot to do. **(or add a coordinating conjunction or make comma a semi-colon)**
9. Christmas is over, but I am still enjoying all the gifts.
10. He went to New Jersey, and I miss him a lot.