

Commas and Coordinating Conjunctions: A Quick Review

The commas are the most useful and usable of all the stops. It is highly important to put them in place as you go along. If you try to come back after doing a paragraph and stick them in the various spots that tempt you you will discover that they tend to swarm like minnows in all sorts of crevices whose existence you hadn't realized and before you know it the whole long sentence becomes immobilized and lashed up squirming in commas. Better to use them sparingly, and with affection, precisely when the need for each one arises, nicely, by itself.

- Lewis Thomas, Notes on Punctuation¹

Commas, Turning Up, Everywhere²

April 25, 2008

The Onion

WASHINGTON—In the midst of a crisis that may have reached a breaking point Tuesday afternoon, linguists, and grammarians, everywhere say they are baffled, by the sudden and seemingly random, appearance of commas, in our nation's sentences. The epidemic of errant punctuation has spread, like wildfire, since signs of the epidemic first, appeared in a *Washington Post* article, on Federal Reserve Chairman, Ben, Bernanke. "This, is an unsettling trend," columnist William Sa,fire, told reporters. "We're seeing a collapse of the grammatical rules that have, held, the English language, together for, centuries." Experts warn, that if this same, phenomenon, should occur with ellipses...

The Onion is an American news satire organization. It is an entertainment newspaper and a website featuring satirical articles reporting on international, national, and local news

¹ <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jlawler/punctuation.html>

² <http://www.theonion.com/articles/commas-turning-up-everywhere,6120/>

Quick review to get started:

1. In your own words, describe or define an **independent clause**.

Coordinating conjunctions are short words that connect words, phrases, and clauses. An easy way to remember the seven coordinating conjunctions is with the acronym **FANBOYS**:

For
And
Nor
But
Or
Yet
So

When one of the **FANBOYS** is used to connect two independent clauses (two complete sentences), a comma must come before the coordinating conjunction (**FANBOYS**). Here is an example of correct and incorrect punctuation with a coordinating conjunction:

Right: My pet penguin has a head cold, so he has a very stuffy squawk.

Wrong: My cat visited the groomer, he now looks like a skinned rat.

2. Write a sentence containing two independent clauses joined by one of the **FANBOYS** using correct punctuation.

