

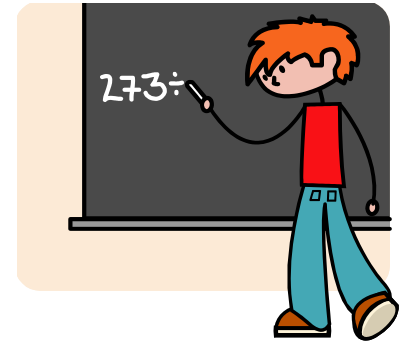
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Key Skills



Using Commas Correctly

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Objectives:

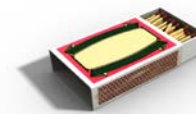
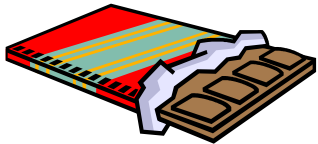
- **Reading:** To learn to recognise how authors use commas in lists and to separate dialogue.
- **Writing:** To learn how to use commas when creating lists and using dialogue.

Using Commas in Lists

Commas can be used for many things but one of its main uses is to replace the word 'and' in a list.

For example, instead of the rather clumsy sentence:

Joseph went to the shop and bought a chocolate bar and a can of pop and a magazine and a box of matches.



You could **use commas** to change it into:

Joseph went to the shop and bought a chocolate bar, a can of pop, a magazine and a box of matches.



Commas replace the word 'and' except for the final 'and' which is always kept in.

Using Commas in Lists

Another of the comma's main uses is to replace the word 'or' in a list of alternatives or choices.

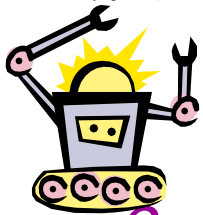
For example, instead of writing:

Joseph went to the cinema but could not decide whether to watch 'Kung Fu Panda' or 'WALL-E' or 'Mamma Mia' or 'Batman' or 'Hancock'.



You could **use commas** to change it into:

Joseph went to the cinema but could not decide whether to watch 'Kung Fu Panda' , 'WALL-E' , 'Mamma Mia' , 'Batman' or 'Hancock'.



Commas replace the word 'or' except for the final 'or' which is always kept in.

Using Commas to replace *and or or*

Use commas to improve the following sentences:

1. Jill went to the bakers and bought a loaf of bread and a sausage roll and a cheese and onion pie and an iced finger.
2. Mum's shopping list included: carrots and potatoes and apples and milk and tomato sauce and eggs.
3. Michael had to decide whether to take part in rock climbing or raft building or abseiling or river walking.
4. I could not decide whether to borrow 'Holes' or 'Point Blanc' or 'Stone Cold' or 'Titanic 2020' or 'Breathe' from the school library.
5. "This morning I've got to catch the bus and go to the the dentist and meet Jack for lunch and pick up the children from school," said mum.

Check Your Understanding

Use commas to improve the following sentences:

1. Jill went to the bakers and bought a loaf of bread, a sausage roll, a cheese and onion pie and an iced finger.
2. Mum's shopping list included: carrots, potatoes, apples, milk, tomato sauce and eggs.
3. Michael had to decide whether to take part in rock climbing, raft building, abseiling or river walking.
4. I could not decide whether to borrow 'Holes', 'Point Blanc', 'Stone Cold', 'Titanic 2020' or 'Breathe' from the school library.
5. "This morning I've got to catch the bus, go to the the dentist, meet Jack for lunch and pick up the children from school," said mum.

Using Commas with Adjectives or Adverbs

Commas are also used to separate adjectives or adverbs when more than one is used to describe a noun or verb.

For example:

He was a tight fisted, miserable, old man.



The sports car swiftly, silently and elegantly drove past.

Similar to the lists on the previous slides this usage is designed to separate adjectives or adverbs and clarify meaning.

Using Commas in Dialogue

The third main use of the comma is to separate the actual words spoken from the rest of the sentence when using speech.

Study these examples:

She said, "Today was a brilliant day."



"I never want to see you again," remarked James.



"I have lost my money," cried Ben, "and my train ticket."



Check Your Understanding

Use commas to separate the dialogue in the following sentences:

1. She said "It takes twenty minutes on the bus."
2. "You had it this morning" said Susan "you can't have lost it already."
3. "My name is Mike" said the contestant "and I'm from Swansea."
4. "I was expecting you an hour ago" said Mr Hulme.
5. "Mrs Hartley" called the Head teacher "can I have a word with you in private?"

Check Your Understanding

Use commas to separate the dialogue in the following sentences:

1. She said, "It takes twenty minutes on the bus."
2. "You had it this morning," said Susan, "you can't have lost it already."
3. "My name is Mike," said the contestant, "and I'm from Swansea."
4. "I was expecting you an hour ago," said Mr Hulme.
5. "Mrs Hartley," called the Head teacher, "could I have a word with you in private?"