

---

### Compound Sentences

Comma Usage: Whenever you have two independent clauses separated by a coordinating conjunction, you must use a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

Definition of terms:

- Coordinating Conjunctions are words that connect either two independent clauses or an independent clause and a dependent clause. The coordinating conjunctions are *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so*.
- Independent clauses are those clauses that make meaning and can stand alone. They make sense. They will contain a subject and a verb or they will have an understood subject and a verb.
  1. John ran to the store. —————> Note that in this sentence, John is the subject of the sentence and ran is the verb.
  2. Close the window! —————> In this sentence, the subject, you, is understood, and the verb is close.
- Dependent clauses are those clauses that cannot stand alone. Even if they have a subject and verb, their meaning is incomplete.
  1. While John ran to the store —————> Note that John is the subject and ran is the verb, so the sentence contains both a subject and a verb; however, it is incomplete and cannot stand alone. It needs more information.

Two independent clauses—two sentences—separated by a coordinating conjunction—*for, an, nor, but, or, yet, so*—must also be marked by a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

Sentence A: Correct comma usage: *John ran to the store, but he walked home*. Notice that both clauses on either side of the comma can stand alone—they make sense. They also are separated by a coordinating conjunction. They need a comma.

Sentence B: Incorrect comma usage: *John ran to the store, but walked home*. Are both clauses able to stand alone? *John ran to the store* can stand alone. *Walked home* cannot stand alone. This sentence has two of the elements—one independent clause and the coordinating conjunction— but lacks one of the key elements. *Walked home* is not an independent clause; therefore, you will not use a comma in a sentence like this one. In this sentence, John, the subject, performs the actions ran and walked. These two actions, ran and walked, are compound verbs. If you place a comma before the coordinating conjunction, you will have separated the subject, John, from its second verb, walked, and subjects and verbs cannot be separated by only one comma.

Independent Clause + Comma + Coordinating Conjunction + Independent Clause = Compound sentence.

Editing Strategy: 1) locate all coordinating conjunctions, 2) examine the clauses on either side, 3) use a comma if the clauses are both independent, but 4) remove the comma if there is only one independent clause.

A comma splice occurs when you put a comma between two independent clauses that are not separated by a coordinating conjunction.