

1. Common errors using commas

Many common sentence structure problems can be fixed by understand clauses. If you are not sure what a clause is, please review the first section of this handout.

2. Commas with compound verbs

The word “and” can join words, phrases, or clauses.

There is **no** comma before the word “and” if the subject of both verbs is the same.

X: The company will expand in Asia, and increase its mobile product line.

→ The company will expand in Asia and increase its mobile product line.



The word “company” is the subject of both verbs.

No comma before “and”

2.1 Commas with compound sentences

The words “So,” and “but,” should not be used in academic writing at the beginning of a sentence (unless it is quoted speech in qualitative research). Their job is to combine two main clauses in a compound sentence. Using “and” at the beginning of a sentence in academic writing should generally also be avoided.

X: Educational technology is always changing. **So,** teachers need support and training to use it effectively.

→Educational technology is always changing, so teachers need support and training to use it effectively.

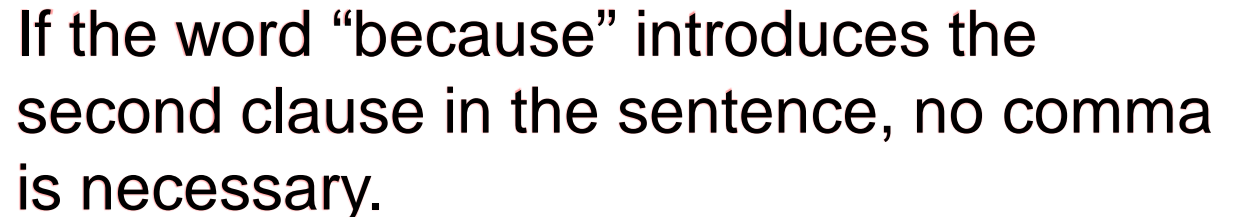
3. Commas with “because”

The word “because” always joins two clauses: a main clause and a subordinate clause.

X: We had to look for less expensive software. **Because** our budget request was not approved.

X: We had to look for less expensive software, **because** our budget request was not approved.

→ We had to look for less expensive software because our budget request was not approved.



If the word “because” introduces the second clause in the sentence, no comma is necessary.

3.1 Sentences starting with “because”

The word “because” always joins two clauses (subject and verb). Like other subordinate clauses, it can come at the beginning of a sentence. However, a comma is necessary before the second clause.

X: Because our budget request was not approved we had to look for less expensive software.

→ Because our budget request was not approved, we had to look for less expensive software.



Comma
required

4. Commas with “however” a

If words like “however” or “therefore” join two clauses, then a semi-colon and comma are required.

X: There are many textbooks on English writing in Korea, **however**, few textbooks explain sentence punctuation in English.

→ *There are* many textbooks on English writing in Korea; however, *few textbooks explain* sentence punctuation in English.

A semi-colon and a comma are needed.
This type of connecting word is called a
“conjunctive adverb.”

There are two subjects and two verbs (two main clauses) in this compound sentence, so commas are not enough to connect them.

4.1 Commas with “however” b

If words like “however” or “therefore” only interrupt a single clause then commas should be put around them.

→ Understanding clause structure is essential to proper punctuation.

However, Korean students are usually taught about sentences structure in a way that does not stress combining clauses.

→ Understanding clause structure is essential to proper punctuation.

Korean students, however, are usually taught about sentence structure without this emphasis.

There is only one subject and verb in this simple sentence.

Subject

Verb

Using commas

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