Comma Tip 4

Know when to use a comma with and.

When you write, only three patterns require and.

Pattern 1 – Joining Two Main Clauses

First, you can use and to connect two main clauses. In this pattern, you should always use a comma.

\[
\text{MAIN CLAUSE} + , + \text{and} + \text{MAIN CLAUSE}.
\]

My dog Floyd sleeps on the bed, and my cat Buster naps in the bathtub.

Dirty dishes fill the kitchen sink, and damp towels litter the bathroom floor.

Pattern 1 works with all the coordinating conjunctions: and, but, for, nor, or, so, and yet.

Pattern 2 – Joining Any Two Units Except Main Clauses

You can also use and to connect any two items. These items can be any grammatical unit except main clauses. When you have only two items, you do not need a comma with and.

\[
\text{ITEM} + \emptyset + \text{and} + \text{ITEM}
\]

My dog Floyd has too many fleas and too much hair.

Buster, my cat, enjoys knocking glasses off the kitchen counter and dragging toilet paper streamers through the house.

Pattern 2 also works with but, nor, or, and yet.
**Pattern 3 – Joining three or more items in a series**

When you have three or more items in a series, use a comma with the *and* that connects the last item.

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ITEM + , + ITEM + , + and + ITEM
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My computer needs more RAM, a faster processor, and a color printer.

George has bad breath, no money, and an annoying mother, but Sherry Lynn still wants to date him.

Pattern 3 also works with *but, nor, or, and yet*.

**Quick Test**

**Directions:** Add commas where necessary.

1. Tony wanted to order a pizza from Papa John’s □ and some Peking duck from Lam’s Garden.

2. Debbie rushed to get the report typed □ and Martha frantically answered the phones.

3. I don’t know when to leave my credit card at home □ and when to say no to a Big Mac with fries.

4. When Mike took his Toyota to the dealership, the mechanics wanted to put in a new starter, replace his shocks □ and overhaul the transmission.

5. Because George snores to wake the dead □ and because Fuzzball, the dog, barks at the slightest sound, Alice never gets a good night’s sleep.