Commas in a list

Use a comma to separate words or phrases in a list.

- In the Cellar, you can rearrange furniture, draw on the whiteboards, and play with the games and toys.
- I am a professional ice skater, area rug designer, brick layer, and hippo trainer.

The comma after the penultimate (2nd to last) item in the list is called the Oxford, or serial, comma. This comma is important for clarity...
Oxford Comma

**WHY I STILL USE THE OXFORD COMMA**

WITH:
I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.

WITHOUT:
I had eggs, toast and orange juice.

With the **Oxford Comma**:
We invited the rhinoceri, Washington, and Lincoln.

Without the **Oxford Comma**:
We invited the rhinoceri, Washington and Lincoln.

Image taken from www.weknowmemes.com

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Super

Use a semicolon as a super-comma.

"While searching for a good place to get a unicorn burger, I traveled to Seattle, Washington; Tokyo, Japan; and London, England."

Use a semicolon if you need to make a list of items that are separated with a comma. This often occurs when listing locations, names, dates, and descriptions.

Mayonnaise made me the man I am today!

"My favorite people include Samuel Slaughterjaws, a famous unicorn hunter; my uncle Wilford, a world champion at mayonnaise eating contests; and Nikola Tesla, the most awesome dude to ever fire a lightning bolt at an angry peasant."

The semicolon enables you to list and describe all three characters in the same sentence.

http://theoatmeal.com/comics/semicolon
**Dependent Clause:** group of words that cannot stand alone as a sentence (aka, *fragment*); describes/modifies a complete sentence

Because I was hungry

**Independent Clause:** group of words that make sense as a complete thought/sentence

Because I was hungry, I ate a whole chicken.
A dependent clause describes something about the sentence, often answering questions like *when, where, why,* and *how.* This clause should be separated from the sentence for clarity. Words that often signal an intro clause:

- although
- because
- since
- when
- if
- while
- as
Introduce me!

- After being lost in the cave for six days the hiker built a GPS system out of stalagmites.
- Once upon a time in a far-away land there were three little pigs.
- To avoid the traffic jam we used jetpacks to get to school.
- If you're a comma superstar you'll know where to punctuate this sentence!
A parenthetical element (aka, non-restrictive clause) can be removed from the sentence without changing the meaning, so it is surrounded by commas. The parenthetical element should describe the word or phrase directly in front it.

The tutor, who is an expert in comma usage, entertained the students with her wit.
Examples

- Dr. Jones, a professor of physics and an avid comic book collector, published an article on the aerodynamic properties of superhero capes.
- Her special talents, which included belching the Star-Spangled Banner while baton-twirling, won her first place in the Toddlers & Tiaras pageant.
- He needed several ingredients such as bread, cheese, and butter before he could make a grilled cheese sandwich.
Conjunctions

For
And
Nor
But
Or
Yet
So

hookin' up words and phrases and clauses

Common mistakes

**Comma splice:** you've joined two sentences together with a comma, but you forgot the conjunction

**Run-on:** you've joined two sentences together with a conjunction, but you forgot the comma
He did not want dessert, for he ate too many brussel sprouts.

The sprouts were tasty, and he could not resist them.

He wouldn't try the cake, nor would he taste the ice cream.

He longed after the pie, but he feared the consequences.

The pie was blueberry, and he could not resist.

He felt a little queasy, yet one little bite couldn't hurt.

Then he grew violently ill, so he learned a valuable lesson.
Topic: monsters & aliens

, for _______________________

, and ______________________

, nor _______________________

, but _______________________

, or _______________________

, yet _______________________

, so _________________________
When

When should I use a semicolon?

“I gnaw on old car tires; it strengthens my jaw so I’ll be better conditioned for bear combat.”

Use a semicolon when you want to form a bond between two statements, typically when they are related to or contrast with one another. In the example above, the relationship between gnawing on tires and combatting bears is strengthened by using a semicolon.

“I fought the bear and won. Also, I never kiss plague rats on the mouth.”

In this sentence, your victory against the bear does not need to be connected to the plague rat, so a period is used.

http://theoatmeal.com/comics/semicolon
So why should we care?

Punctuation matters!

Image from www.badideatshirts.com
Dear John

I want a man who knows what love is all about you are generous kind thoughtful people who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior you have ruined me for other men I yearn for you I have no feelings whatsoever when we’re apart I can be forever happy will you let me be yours Gloria
Dear John:
I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy--will you let me be yours?
Gloria

Dear John:
I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be?
Yours, Gloria