

Punctuating Coordinate Adjectives

Two or more adjectives preceding the noun that they modify are ordinarily separated by commas.

a **tall, handsome** stranger the **firm, red, round** apple

Coordinate adjectives, or adjectives of equal rank, are separated by commas when they precede a noun. Coordinate adjectives can be identified by either of two simple tests.

(1) If *and* is placed between them and the resulting construction sounds natural, they are coordinate.

a **tall, handsome** stranger a **tall and handsome** stranger

(2) If the order of the adjectives can be reversed without changing the basic meaning, they are coordinate.

a **tall, handsome** stranger a **handsome, tall** stranger

Compound adjectives preceding a noun are separated by a hyphen, not a comma.

well-read student **deep-seated** anger

When two modifiers precede a noun and the first modifies the second, not the noun, no comma is required.

light blue dress (*light* modifies *blue*, not *dress*)

Exercise: Punctuating Modifiers That Precede a Noun

Place commas or hyphens where they are needed in the following sentences. Some sentences require no punctuation.

1. Drama can provide us with first class entertainment.
2. Shakespeare was an admired early dramatist.
3. His plays have been very popular for centuries.
4. *Hamlet* may be his most popular tragedy.
5. Many plays are performed with colorful realistic scenery.
6. Skilled experienced actors are needed in professional productions.
7. Romeo is a well known tragic character in Shakespearean drama.
8. Juliet is his young spirited girlfriend.
9. An actor playing Romeo would have to be youthful and confident.
10. Many charming talented actresses have performed as Juliet.

Commas in a Series

A **series** consists of three or more items of the same kind written one after the other in a sentence. For clarity, a comma should be placed after each item in a series except the last one.

"The Highwayman" portrays love, courage, and betrayal.

The hours dragged by slowly, slowly, slowly.

Exercise: Punctuating Items in a Series

Place commas if and where they are needed in the following sentences. If a sentence needs no commas, write *Correct* next to the number.

1. Alfred Noyes Robert Frost and Lewis Carroll are my favorite poets.
2. "The Highwayman" is famous for its mood tone and imagery.
3. Were the soldiers heroes or villains in the poem?
4. The dark ghostly windswept night provided a mysterious atmosphere.
5. The hero was dashing when he spoke when he rode and when he fought.
6. He wore a French hat a velvet coat and doeskin breeches.
7. The beautiful Bess had dark eyes and dark hair.
8. Soldiers came at sunset and arranged a trap.
9. They threatened bound and gagged Bess.
10. Fear anger hatred and disgust raged in her soul.
11. The soldiers treated her with contempt and showed her no mercy.
12. The soldiers waited patiently calmly treacherously.
13. Bess had the choice to do something or not.
14. She pulled the trigger warned her lover and saved his life.
15. He turned cursed and galloped away.

Punctuating Compound Sentences

A **compound sentence** is two or more simple sentences that are joined by a semicolon *or* by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or*). The sentences in a compound sentence should have a close and logical relationship.

Zeus was handsome, **but** Narcissus was even more handsome.

Exercise: Creating Compound Sentences

On the line, rewrite each of the following pairs of sentences to create a compound sentence. Add the necessary words and punctuation.

1. There were many beautiful nymphs in the mountains. The most beautiful was Echo.

2. Zeus liked the nymphs. Hera thought he liked them too much.

3. Hera discovered that Zeus had left Olympus. She went to find him.

4. Echo fell in love with Narcissus. Narcissus could love only himself.

5. Narcissus went up high in the mountains. He became separated from his friends.

6. He called, "Come to me!" to his friends. Eagerly, Echo repeated his words.

7. Narcissus looked in to a pool of water. A beautiful face looked back.

8. Could Narcissus touch the face in the water? Could he leave?

9. He cried that he loved in vain. Echo repeated his words.

10. Narcissus grew weaker and weaker. Finally, he died.
