A workshop to improve
writing skills

PIZZA AND PUNCTUATION

PRESENTED BY
Academic support services
&
The writing center
BASIC GRAMMAR

PARTS OF SPEECH
Nouns: A noun names a person, place, thing, or concept

The cat in gloves catches no mice.
Nouns: A noun names a person, place, thing, or concept

The *cat* in *gloves* catches no *mice*.
Pronouns: A pronoun substitutes for a noun.

We will never have friends if we expect to find them without fault.
Pronouns: A pronoun substitutes for a noun.

*We will never have friends if* *we* *expect to find* *them* *without fault.*
Verbs: The verb in the sentence usually expresses action (jump, think) or being (is, become).

The best fish swim near the bottom.
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Adjective: An adjective modifies a noun or pronoun, usually answering one of these questions: Which one? What kind of? How many? The articles *a, an, and the* are also adjectives.

The lame elephant

Valuable old stamps
BASIC GRAMMAR

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The *lame* elephant (Which elephant?)  
*Valuable old* stamps (what kind of stamps?)
Adverbs: An adverb is a word used to modify, or qualify, a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. It usually answers one of these questions: When? Where? How? Why?

Pull gently at a weak rope.
Read the best books first.
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Pull *gently* at a weak rope. (Pull how?)
Read the best books *first*. (Read when?)
Prepositions: The preposition is a word placed before a noun or pronoun to form a phrase modifying another word in the sentence.

A journey of a thousands miles begins with a single step.
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Conjunctions: A conjunction joins words, phrases, or clauses, and they indicate the relation between the elements joined.

A coordinating conjunction is used to connect grammatically equal elements. The coordinating conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*.

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Conjunctions: A conjunction joins words, phrases, or clauses, and they indicate the relation between the elements joined.

Correlative conjunctions come in pairs: either...or; neither...nor; not only...but also; whether...or; both...and.

Either Jack Sprat or His wife could eat no fat.
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*Either* Jack Sprat *or* His wife could eat no fat.
RUN-ON SENTENCES

This is one reason why we need correct punctuation.
Recognizing a run-on sentence

When a writer puts no mark of punctuation and no coordinating conjunction between independent clauses, the result is called a fused sentence.

Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
**Recognizing a run-on sentence**

When a writer puts no mark of punctuation and no coordinating conjunction between independent clauses, the result is called a *fused sentence*.

Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
Recognizing a run-on sentence

A far more common type of run-on sentence is the comma splice – two or more independent clauses joined with a comma but without a coordinating conjunction.

Air pollution poses risks to all humans, it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
Run-on Sentences

Revising a run-on sentence

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices:
1) Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet).

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Run-on Sentences

Revising a run-on sentence

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices:
1) Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet).

Air pollution poses risks to all humans, but it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
Run-on Sentences

Revising a run-on sentence

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices:
2) Use a semicolon

Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
Run-on Sentences

Revising a run-on sentence

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices:

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Air pollution poses risks to all humans; it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
Run-on Sentences

Revising a run-on sentence

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices:

3) Make the clauses into separate sentences.

Air pollution poses risks to all humans; it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
Run-on Sentences

Revising a run-on sentence

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices:
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Air pollution poses risks to all humans. It can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
Run-on Sentences

Revising a run-on sentence

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices:

4) Restructure the sentence.

Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
Run-on Sentences

Revising a run-on sentence

To revise a run-on sentence, you have four choices:
4) Restructure the sentence.

Although air pollution poses risks to all humans, it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.
PUNCTUATION
THE COMMA

RULE: Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction joining independent clauses.

There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English: *and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet.*

EXAMPLE: Nearly everyone has heard of love at first sight but I fell in love at first dance.
THE COMMA

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There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English: and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet.

EXAMPLE: Nearly everyone has heard of love at first sight, but I fell in love at first dance.
THE COMMA

RULE: Use a comma after an introductory clause or phrase.
A comma tells readers that the introductory clause or phrase has come to a close and that the main part of the sentence is about to begin.

EXAMPLE: When Irwin was ready to iron his cat tripped on the cord.
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THE COMMA

RULE: Use a comma between all items in a series.

When three or more items are presented in a series, those items should be separated from one another with commas.

EXAMPLE: Uncle David willed me all of his property, houses and warehouses.
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THE COMMA

RULE: Use a comma between coordinate adjectives not joined with *and*.

When two or more adjectives each modify a noun separately, they are coordinate.

EXAMPLE: Patients with severe irreversible brain damage should not be put on life support systems.
THE COMMA

RULE: Use a comma between coordinate adjectives not joined with and.

When two or more adjectives each modify a noun separately, they are coordinate.

EXAMPLE: Patients with severe, irreversible brain damage should not be put on life support systems.
RULE: Do not use a comma between cumulative adjectives.

Adjectives that do not modify the noun separately are cumulative.

EXAMPLE: *Three large gray shapes* moved slowly toward us.
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EXAMPLE: *Three large gray shapes moved slowly toward us.*

* Gray modifies shapes, large modifies gray shapes, and three modifies large gray shapes.*
THE COMMA

RULE: Use commas to set off nonrestrictive elements.

A nonrestrictive element describes a noun or pronoun whose meaning has been clearly defined or limited. (many writers use which with nonrestrictive clauses)

EXAMPLE: For camp the children need sturdy shoes which are expensive.
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A nonrestrictive element describes a noun or pronoun whose meaning has been clearly defined or limited. (many writers use which with nonrestrictive clauses)

EXAMPLE: For camp the children need sturdy shoes, which are expensive.
RULE: Do not use commas to set off **restrictive** elements.

A restrictive element defines or limits the meaning of the word it modifies and is therefore essential to the meaning of the sentence. (many writers use *that* with restrictive clauses)

EXAMPLE: For camp the children need clothes *that are washable*. 
THE COMMA

RULE: Use commas to set off nonrestrictive adjective clauses.

Adjective clauses always follow the word they modify, usually immediately.

EXAMPLE: Ed’s house which is located on thirteen acres was completely furnished with bats in the rafters and mice in the kitchen.
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Adjective clauses always follow the word they modify, usually immediately.

EXAMPLE: Ramona’s cat that just had kittens became defensive around the other cats in the house.
PRACTICE: Professional athletes who perform exceptionally should earn stratospheric salaries.

Restrictive Adjective Clause: No commas suggest that only those athletes who perform exceptionally are entitled to such salaries.
PRACTICE: Professional athletes, *who perform exceptionally*, should earn stratospheric salaries.

**Non-Restrictive Adjective Clause:** The commas before *who* and after *exceptionally* suggest that all professional athletes should receive stratospheric salaries.
RULE: Use commas to set off transitional expressions.

Transitional expressions include conjunctive adverbs however, therefore, and moreover.

EXAMPLE: Minh did not understand our language; moreover he was unfamiliar with our customs.
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RULE: Use commas to set off parenthetical expressions. Providing supplemental information, they interrupt the flow of a sentence or appear at the end as afterthoughts.

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EXAMPLE: Evolution, as far as we know, does not work this way.
THE COMMA

RULE: Use commas to set off absolute phrases.

Absolute phrases may appear at the beginning or at the end of a sentence.

EXAMPLE: The sun appearing for the first time in a week we were at last able to begin the archaeological dig.
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Absolute phrases may appear at the beginning or at the end of a sentence.

EXAMPLE: The sun appearing for the first time in a week, we were at last able to begin the archaeological dig.
RULE: Use commas to set off contrasted elements.

Sharp contrasts beginning with words such as not, never, and unlike are set off with commas.

EXAMPLE: The Epicurean philosophers sought mental not bodily pleasures.
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EXAMPLE: The Epicurean philosophers sought mental, not bodily, pleasures.
THE COMMA

RULE: Use commas with expressions such as *he said* to set off direct quotes.

If a quotation is introduced with an expression such as *he said* or *she remarked* a comma is needed.

EXAMPLE: Naturalist Arthur Cleveland Bent remarked “In part the peregrine declined unnoticed because it is not adorable.”
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EXAMPLE: Naturalist Arthur Cleveland Bent remarked, “In part the peregrine declined unnoticed because it is not adorable.”
THE COMMA

RULE: Use a comma to prevent confusion.

In certain contexts a comma is necessary to prevent confusion.

EXAMPLE: While we were eating a rattlesnake approached our campsite.
THE COMMA

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EXAMPLE: While we were eating, a rattlesnake approached our campsite.
RULE: Do not use a comma between compound elements that are not independent clauses.

Though a comma should be used before a coordinating conjunction, do not extend this rule to other compound word groups.

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RULE: Do not use a comma between compound elements that are not independent clauses.

Though a comma should be used before a coordinating conjunction, do not extend this rule to other compound word groups.

EXAMPLE: Marie Curie discovered radium, and later applied her work on radioactivity to medicine.
RULE: Do not use a comma to set off a concluding adverb clause that is essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Adverb clauses beginning with after, as soon as, because, before, if, since, unless, until, and when are usually essential.

EXAMPLE: Do not visit Paris at the height of the tourist season, unless you have booked hotel reservations.
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EXAMPLE: Do not visit Paris at the height of the tourist season unless you have booked hotel reservations.
RULE: Use a comma to set off a concluding adverb clause that is nonessential to the meaning of the sentence.

Adverb clauses beginning with although, even though, though, and whereas are usually nonessential.

EXAMPLE: The lecture seemed to last only a short time although the clock said it had gone on for more than an hour.
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Adverb clauses beginning with although, even though, though, and whereas are usually nonessential.

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RULE: Do not use a comma to separate a verb from its subject or object.

A sentence should flow from subject to verb to object without unnecessary pauses.

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THE SEMICOLON

RULE: Use a semicolon between closely related independent clauses not joined with a coordinating conjunction.

A semicolon must be used whenever a coordinating conjunction has been omitted between independent clauses.

EXAMPLE: In 1800, a traveler needed six weeks to get from New York City to Chicago, in 1860, the trip by railroad took only two days.
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When a transitional expression appears between independent clauses, it is preceded by a semicolon and usually followed by a comma.

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RULE: Use a semicolon between items in a series containing internal punctuation.

Without the semicolons, the reader would have to sort out the major groupings.

EXAMPLE: Classic science fiction sagas are Star Trek, with Mr. Spock; Battlestar Galactica, with Cylon Raiders; and Star Wars, with Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader.
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THE COLON

RULE: Use a colon after an independent clause to direct attention to a list.

The colon is used primarily to call attention to the words that follow it.

EXAMPLE: The daily routine should include at least the following twenty knee bends, fifty sit-up, and five minutes of running in place.
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RULE: Use a colon after an independent clause to direct attention to an appositive.

An Appositive is a noun or noun phrase that renames or adds identifying information to a noun it immediately follows.

EXAMPLE: My roommate is guilty of two of the seven deadly sins gluttony and sloth.
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An Appositive is a noun or noun phrase that renames or adds identifying information to a noun it immediately follows.

EXAMPLE: My roommate is guilty of two of the seven deadly sins: gluttony and sloth.
RULE: Use a colon between two independent clauses if the second summarizes or explains the first.

EXAMPLE: Faith is like love, it cannot be forced.
THE COLON

RULE: Use a colon between two independent clauses if the second summarizes or explains the first.

EXAMPLE: Faith is like love: it cannot be forced.
RULE: Use an apostrophe to indicate that a noun is possessive.

Possessive nouns usually indicate ownership, as in Tim’s hat or the lawyer’s desk.
THE APOSTROPHE

RULE: Do not use an apostrophe with nouns that are plural but not possessive.

Avoid common misuses of the apostrophe.

EXAMPLE: Some resident’s have special parking permits.
THE APOSTROPHE

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Avoid common misuses of the apostrophe.

EXAMPLE: Some resident’s residents have special parking permits.
THE APOSTROPHE

RULE: Do not use the apostrophe in the possessive pronouns its, whose, his, hers, ours, yours, and theirs.

Avoid common misuses of the apostrophe. Its is a possessive pronoun; it’s is a contraction for it is.

EXAMPLE: The dog licked its wound whenever its owner walked into the room. It’s a beautiful day.
QUOTATION MARKS

Question marks: periods and commas.
Place periods and commas inside quotation marks

“This is a stick-up,” said the well-dressed young couple. “We want all your money.”
Harold wrote, “I regret that I am unable to attend the fundraiser for AIDS research”; his letter, however, came with a substantial contribution.
Do not use quotation marks to draw attention to familiar slang, to disown trite expressions, or to justify an attempt at humor.

Between Thanksgiving and Super Bowl Sunday, many American wives become “football widows.”
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All information and examples taken from:

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