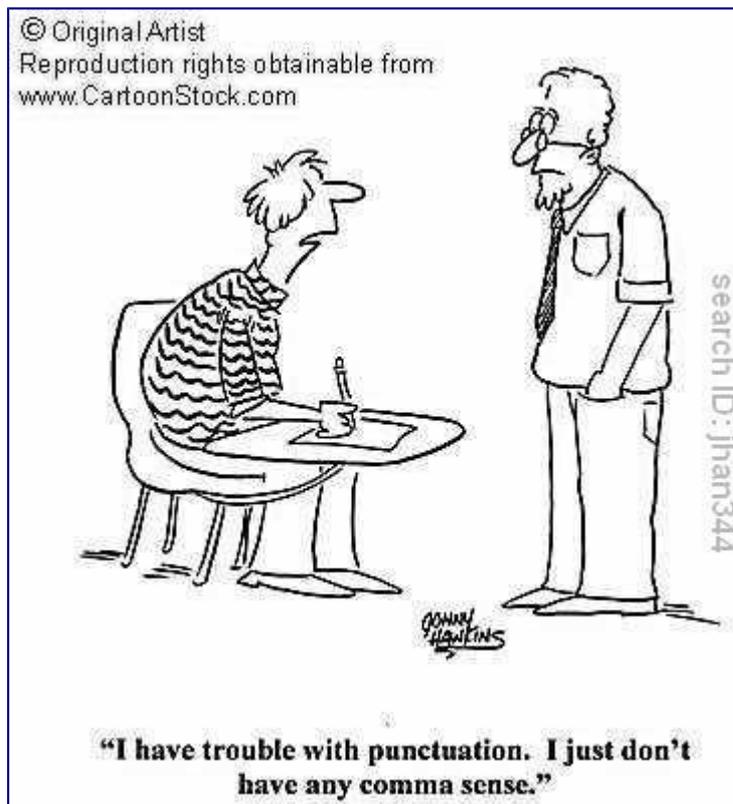


Comma Sense!

-Posted by [Chamber Lady](#)

<http://englishlanguage101.wordpress.com/category/common-mistakes/>



A friend very sweetly suggested that the next post I write for this blog should be about the use of commas. Normally I know where to put a comma, as do most of you, I imagine, but there are times when you are plain confused about whether or not that comma should be there. I know this happens with me all the time, especially when I am deep into editing serious Sociology books. You read a few sentences in good flow, and than bam! There is a comma and you are utterly confused if it should be there at all. So, when do you use a comma? Before that, what is a comma exactly? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word comma comes directly from the Greek komma (κόμμα), which means something cut off or a short clause. It has a very commonly mistaken usage in the English language, so where exactly do you put a comma?

1. Between two adjectives where you could use the word "and" but did not:

She is a sultry, beautiful woman.

2. To separate words and word-groups with a series of three or more:

I want my estate to be divided equally between my daughter, son, and niece.

In the above example, if you did not put the comma after "son" you may cause readers to think that your son and your niece are to divide one half of the estate while the other half goes to your daughter. 3. Before and after the name of a person directly addressed:

Will you, Damian, please stand up?

4. When you are referring to a date and place, a comma comes after the month and after the year:

The Duchess of Cambridge was married on 29th April, 2011, at the Westminster

Abbey.

However, if a date is not given in full, leave out the comma. (I met her in October at London)⁵. After a city name, if the name of the state or after a state, when the name of the country is to follow:, and after the name of state / country if it is a longer statement:

The Queen will be away on vacation at her castle in Balmoral, Scotland. The citizens of Los Angeles, California, protested against the proposed pipeline project of the government

. 6. After degrees held by people:

Priyanka Upadhyay, PhD, will be available for a press conference after the announcement at the Science Center

7. When there is an interruption in the flow of the sentence:

That part of the palace, since you asked, is not accessible by the public.

8. When a sentence begins with a weak clause (In grammar, a clause is the smallest grammatical unit that can express a complete proposition), a comma follows it:

If you are not going to finish this, tell me now.

9. When you sufficiently identify someone but add a superfluous description of that person, commas will be around the description:

Elizabeth II, the Queen of England, will be visiting Australia later this month.

10. To separate two strong clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction such as and, but, etc:

I chopped up all the fruits for the jelly, but she hasn't finished cleaning the stove yet

. 11. When a phrase of more than three words begins a sentence but needs another to complete it:

To make an exception, I told them they could go home early today.

12. Just before a direct quote, and after it if the quote is not complete:

My teacher told me, "Get your notebook here." "Will you," she pleaded, "not come just once?"

13. To separate a statement from a question:

You will come tomorrow, won't you?

14. To separate contrasting parts of a sentence:

The Duchess wore Alexander McQueen, not Karl Lagerfeld.

15. When a sentence begins with words like Well, Now, Yes, No:

No, I don't think so. Well, I think I should leave now.

16. Before or after words like However and Therefore (adverbs) when these are used as interruptions in a sentence:

I would, therefore, not tolerate your inquisitiveness any more. I am, however, happy that he scored so well. We will be at Joe's on Thursday, which happens to

be his birthday, cooking dinner.

17. When a verb is omitted in a sentence:

The day was grim, the sky dark.

18. When you are using parenthetical phrases in a sentence:

Introduction: Once upon a time, there lived a princess in the kingdom of Far, Far Away

Interjection: The prince killed the dragon, blessed be he!

Aside: The princess, I heard, eats only cake.

Appositive: The prince, a strong and handsome boy, will make a fine king.

Absolute phrase: The princess, her hair left loose, was crying all day.

Free modifier: The prince, trembling with excitement, drank the love potion in a single gulp.

Resumptive modifier: The prince rescued the princess, a princess that no man had ever seen.

Summative modifier: The prince killed the dragon, a job he was destined to do.

19. To avoid confusion in names:

To Catherine, Princess of Wales was an idol.

20. To refer to a phrase at the end of the sentence that refers to the beginning or middle of the sentence:

Vanessa smiled at her little daughter, who cooed at her.

Sorry, I made this post rather technical with all those terms that I should have explained. But I hope I have given enough examples to help you work around the technicality of the terms. I will try to explain the terms later sometime. And having said everything, I'd still say, keep it simple. If you think there has to be a pause in your sentence, use a comma. How wrong can you go, really?