



# The Language Support Hub

## How to use commas (,)

1. **Golden Rule:** Never use only one comma between a subject and its verb.

Example: Student from all background and ages, attend school.

2. Use a comma to separate the elements in a series (three or more things).

Example: He hit the ball, dropped the bat, and ran to first base.

**Not here:** We were prepared to play and to win.

3. Pay attention to the use of comma before 'and.'

There are situations in which, if you don't use a comma before 'and' (especially when the list is complex or lengthy), these last two items in the list will try to glom together.

**This example might cause problems:** I bough three different pizzas: pepperoni, Spanish ham and seafood. [Seems like there are only two kinds of pizza: 1) pepperoni, 2) Spanish ham + Cheese].

Adding a comma clarifies the situation: I bough three different pizzas: pepperoni, Spanish ham, and seafood.

4. Use a comma + a little **conjunction** (and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so) to connect two independent clauses.

Example: He hit the ball well, **but** he ran toward third base."

5. Use a comma to set off introductory elements.

Example: Running toward third base, he suddenly realized how stupid he looked.

6. Use a comma to set off **parenthetical elements**.

Example: The Founders Bridge, **which spans the Connecticut River**, is falling down."

A parenthetical element is a part of a sentence that can be removed without changing the essential meaning of that sentence.

7. Use a comma to set off **quoted elements**.

Example: Summing up this argument, Peter Coveney writes, "The purpose and strength of the romantic image of the child had been above all to establish a relation between childhood and adult consciousness."