Commas & Semicolons:
American Psychological Association Format – 7th edition

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Commas: Independent clause joined by a conjunction

- An independent clause has a subject and verb and can stand on its own as a complete sentence.
- Conjunctions are words that connect two independent clauses:
  - Examples: and, as, because, but, for, nor, or, so, while, yet, etc.
- Commas are placed before the conjunction.
- Examples of sentences that are composed of two independent clauses connected by a conjunction:
  - The writer believes in clarity, and he added a chart of definitions.
  - The writer believes in clarity, but he did not add a chart of definitions.
  - The writer believes in clarity, so he added a chart of definitions.
Semicolons: Independent clause not joined by a conjunction

- An independent clause has a subject and verb and can stand on its own as a complete sentence.
- Conjunctions are words that connect two independent clauses:
  - Examples: and, as, because, but, for, nor, or, so, while, yet, etc.
- Use a semicolon to connect sentences with related topics that do not have a conjunction.
- Example of sentence that is composed of two independent clauses and is not connected by a conjunction:
  - The writer believes in clarity; he added a chart of definitions.
Commas: Introductory clause

- An introductory clause is a clause at the beginning of a sentence that provides additional background information.
  - Use a comma after an introductory clause.
- Examples of comma placement after an introductory clause:
  - For clarity, the writer added a chart of definitions.
  - The writer believes in clarity; therefore, the writer added a chart of definitions.
Commas: Appositive clause

- Appositive clauses are nonrestrictive clauses that “rename” the noun.
  - A nonrestrictive clause does not affect the meaning of the sentence.
  - These clauses have commas placed before and after the clause.
- Examples of sentences with appositive clauses:
  - Dr. Smith, the cardiologist, is in the hospital currently.
  - The American Nurses Association, a national nursing organization, endorses the inherent dignity of an individual.
Commas: Nonrestrictive clause in a middle of a sentence

- Nonrestrictive clauses are clauses that do not affect the meaning of a sentence.
  - These clauses could be deleted without changing the meaning of the sentence.
  - These clauses have commas placed before and after the clause.
- Examples of sentences with a nonrestrictive clause in a middle of a sentence:
  - *He ran this morning and, therefore, will not run tonight.*
  - *He loves to run, in general, in the morning.*
Commas: Compound predicate

- A compound predicate occurs when a subject is associated with two or more verbs.
  - No comma is used between two verbs.
  - Commas are used to separate three or more verbs.
- Examples of sentences with a compound predicate:
  - He ran this morning and swam in the afternoon.
  - He ran this morning, ate lunch, and swam in the afternoon.
Commas: Multiple objects of the verb

- The verb may refer to more than one object.
  - No comma is used between two objects.
  - Commas are used to separate three or more objects.

- Examples of sentences with two or more objects:
  - He believes that integrity builds character and that lying undermines reputation.
  - He believes that integrity builds character, lying undermines reputation, and grace restores relationships.
Commas: Series of items

- Commas are placed to separate items in a series of three or more items.
  - Commas are not used for two items.

- Example of comma placement in a series of three or more items:
  - I asked my son to pick up apples, oranges, and pears from the grocery.

- Example of comma placement with two items:
  - I asked my son to pick up apples and oranges from the grocery.
Semicolons: Series of items

- Semicolons are placed to separate items in a series that contain commas.
- Example of a series that includes commas within a listed item:
  - He likes several slide color combinations, such as red, white, and blue; black and white; and several shades of blue.
Commas: Which vs. that

- **Which** is used to add information that is *not* essential to the meaning of the sentence, a nonrestrictive clause.
  - A comma is used before *which*.
- **That** is used to add information that is essential to the meaning of the sentence, a restrictive clause.
  - No comma is used before *that*.

Examples of sentences:

- *He loves to run in the morning, which is his favorite time of day.*
- *He loves to run on the mornings that he is off work.*
Commas: As well as

- When trying to determine whether a comma is needed with the phrase, as well as, substitute the word, and, for the phrase.
- Examples of sentences:
  - He ran this morning (as well as/and) swam today.
    - The compound predicate does not have a comma before as well as.
  - He ran to the store, the post office, (as well as/and) the grocery.
    - The series of three objects has a comma before as well as.
Commas and semicolons: Quotation marks

- Commas (and periods) are placed before the end quotation marks in a sentence.
- Semicolons (and colons) are placed after the end quotation marks in a sentence.

Examples of sentences with commas:
- “Hard work begets results,” according to my coach.
- “Remember to proofread before submitting your paper,” reminded the instructor.

Example of sentence with a semicolon:
- After your presentation, your mentor stated, “I fully agree with your conclusion”; she was impressed that you weighed recent research evidence and considered the patient’s preferences in your decision-making.
Semicolons: Connecting two or more sets of parentheses

- Join adjacent sets of parentheses with a semicolon.
- Example of a sentence with adjacent sets of parentheses:
- Example of a sentence with the parenthetical information joined with a semicolon.
  - The American Nurses Association (ANA; 2015) expounded on ethical principles essential for nursing practice.
Thank you for reviewing!