

Glossary

Adverbial – An adverbial is a phrase that gives extra information about the action in a sentence. It might tell us when, where or how something was done. A fronted adverbial, as you might guess, appears at the beginning of a sentence, for example: **One day**, *Young Lambton went fishing.*

Clause – A clause is a part of a sentence that contains a verb. The main clause is the part of the sentence that would make sense on its own, for example: **Young Lambton tied the Worm up in his fishing bag**, *hoping it wouldn't bite through the leather.* The subordinate clause (*hoping it wouldn't bite through the leather*) needs the main clause to make sense.

Direct speech – This is the actual words that someone said. The words are written in inverted commas (or speech marks), for example: *'I've got a fine fish here,' he cried.* Reported speech doesn't use speech marks, for example: *Young Lambton said that he'd caught a fine fish.*



What's the use of a comma?

A comma is a handy little punctuation mark that can make writing easier to read.

But to do this, a comma has to be used correctly.

Let's take a look at how this is done.

1. Commas in lists

The first thing we learn about commas is that they can be used to separate items in a list:

The Worm gobbled up cows, chickens, pigs and sheep.

Comma before 'and'?

Most of us are taught that you don't need to use a comma before 'and'. This is usually true but sometimes a comma before 'and' helps to make a sentence clearer:

Young Lambton's favourite pies were fish and leek, chicken and mushroom, and steak and kidney.

This type of comma is called an 'Oxford comma'.

2. Commas in speech

When we get a bit older, we learn how commas are used with speech marks to show direct speech:

'It'll make a man of you, boy,' said his father.

'My young Lord,' said the blacksmith, 'take also this fire-forged sword,'

Don't double up

Of course, you don't need a comma if the spoken words end with a question or exclamation:

'What has happened?' he asked.

'A worm!' he cried.

3. Commas to separate parts of a sentence

And when we're older still, we learn about how commas are used to separate parts of a sentence. (This is where the 'grammar words' get a bit trickier, so use the glossary at the end if you get stuck!)

Commas can separate:

Fronted adverbials

***Years ago,** Lord Lambton was Lord of the Manor thereabouts.*

***Crunching and munching,** the Worm spread terror through the manor.*

Subordinate clauses

*Young Lambton tied the Worm up in his fishing bag, **hoping it wouldn't bite through the leather.***

*He whistled all the way back to the castle, **drying his slimy hands on his cloak,** and thought no more about the nasty creature.*

Extra information and asides

*In the north-east of England, **near Sunderland,** lies a grassy mound called Penshaw Hill.*

*One day, Young Lambton, **the Lord's lazy son,** went down to the River Wear to fish.*

Name

Class

Date

Conquering the comma!

Use what you have learned to add the missing commas to the sentences. Don't forget to use your red editor's pen!

1. It was bigger than a cat more like an eel than a worm with a head like a melon eyes like ping-pong balls and jaws crammed with pointy teeth.
2. 'Just what I need to see the back of this disgusting creature' said Young Lambton.
3. He was a rotten shot with arrows timid with a sword and too spindly to be a good knight.
4. Wondering how it would taste if the castle cook made it into an eel pie with onions peas and a few mushrooms he packed up his fishing tackle and set off for home.
5. 'I don't mean a skinny wriggler of a garden worm' explained Lord Lambton, 'I mean a stalking cow-eating sheep-snaffling child-terrorising MONSTER!'
6. Every day the Dragon demanded the sacrifice of an innocent maiden.
7. There was no clear successor to the throne after Uther Pendragon King of the Britons died.
8. When he wasn't hiding his favourite thing was to eat sweet rocks from the countryside.
9. When they arrived however Merlin was not there.
10. 'We are not the king and queen' they howled.
11. 'You promised to protect us' they shouted.
12. The Dragon charged out spitting fire from its nostrils.

Remember

Sometimes it's better not to worry about whether you're separating out a fronted adverbial or a subordinate clause but just to read a sentence aloud. Where do you pause in the sentence? How could a comma make the meaning clear?