

1 Here's the Idea

The following rules can help you use commas to clarify your ideas for readers.

Adding Commas for Clarity

▶ **Use a comma to separate words that might be misread.**

Unclear: The car campers felt fortunate for the good weather had lasted all week.

Clear: The car campers felt fortunate, for the good weather had lasted all week.

▶ **Use a comma to replace an omitted word or words.**

Some car or RV travelers prefer to drive all day; others prefer to drive all night.

Some car or RV travelers prefer to drive all day; others, all night.

▶ **When making a contrast, use a comma with antithetical phrases that use words such as *not* and *unlike*.**

Driving to another state, unlike flying, allows you to pack all the clothing you want for a trip.

Read your writing aloud to find awkward sentences that might need commas or additional reworking.

Eliminating Comma Splices

A **comma splice** occurs when you use a comma to separate two main clauses. To correct this error, you can replace the comma with a period or a semicolon, or you could add a coordinating conjunction, such as *and*, *or*, *so*, or *but* after the comma.

Comma splice: Travelers who car camp don't actually sleep in their cars, they camp out in sleeping bags or tents.

Possible fixes: Travelers who car camp don't actually sleep in their cars. **They** camp out in sleeping bags or tents.

Travelers who car camp don't actually sleep in their cars; **they** camp out in sleeping bags or tents.

Travelers who car camp don't actually sleep in their cars, **but** they camp out in sleeping bags or tents.