Common comma errors

Comma is a very common punctuation mark. It is used to indicate a slight pause within a sentence. Students often misuse commas. If you don't know whether a comma is appropriate in a particular sentence, try reading the sentence aloud. If the sentence sounds better without a pause, omit the comma. If it sounds better with a pause, add a comma. Don't scatter commas throughout your writing.

Common mistakes in the use of commas

Do not place a comma between two verbs.

The children were singing and dancing. (NOT The children were singing, and dancing.)
Use a comma to separate independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (e.g. and, but, or, so, yet, nor).

She was not feeling very well, but she went to work.
However, the comma can be avoided when the clauses are too short.

When an adverb clause comes at the beginning of a sentence, we usually separate it with a comma.

After she finished her homework, she watched TV.
As I was walking down the street, I saw him driving a Ferrari.
The comma is not necessary when the main clause comes at the beginning of the sentence.

She watched TV after she finished her homework.
Two clauses that are not connected by a coordinating conjunction cannot be separated by a comma.

She was tired and went to bed. (NOT She was tired she went to bed.)
When a sentence begins with a conjunctive adverb, you need to separate the adverb with a comma.

She was tired. Therefore, she decided to get some rest. (NOT She was tired. Therefore she decided to get some rest.)