



## The Comma vs. the Semicolon in Compound Sentences

A group of words containing a subject and a verb and expressing a complete thought is called a sentence or an independent clause. Sometimes, an independent clause stands alone as a sentence, and sometimes two independent clauses are linked together into one sentence which is called a compound sentence. There are two different marks of punctuation which can be used between these independent clauses, the comma and the semicolon. The choice is yours.

### *THE COMMA(,)*

Use a comma after the first independent clause when you choose to link the two independent clauses with any one of these words: and, but, for, or, nor, and sometimes so and yet

Examples: I am going home, and I intend to stay there.

It rained heavily during the afternoon, but we managed to have our picnic anyway.

### *THE SEMICOLON (;)*

Use the semicolon when you choose to join two independent clauses together with NO connecting words.

Examples: I am going home; I intend to stay there.

It rained heavily during the afternoon; we managed to have our picnic anyway.

You can also use the semicolon when you join two independent clauses together with one of those long connecting words such as: however, moreover, therefore, consequently, otherwise, nevertheless, thus, etc.

**Examples:** I am going home; moreover, I intend to stay there.

It rained heavily during the afternoon; however, we managed to have our picnic anyway.

### **Exercises:**

The following sentences need either commas or semicolons. Put in the punctuation that is needed.

1. Many companies make sugar free soft drinks which are very good and the drinks contain only one or two calories per bottle.
2. Mr. Leyland once played in a symphony moreover, he now conducts a community orchestra.
3. The crab grass was flourishing but the rest of the lawn, unfortunately, was dying.
4. The hill was covered with wildflowers it was a beautiful sight.
5. As I turned around, I heard a loud thump for the cat had upset the goldfish bowl.
6. The artist preferred to paint in oils for he did not like watercolors.
7. The house was clean, the table set, and the porch light on everything was ready for the guests' arrival.
8. He looked carefully in the underbrush and he saw a pair of green eyes staring at him.
9. The foundations of the house had been poured but, to his disappointment, nothing else had been done because of the carpenters' strike.
10. The secretary could type sixty words a minute and take shorthand however, she could not spell.



11. I thought registration day would be tiring but I didn't know I'd have to stand in so many lines.
12. The dog, growling and snarling, snapped at me I was so frightened that I ran.
13. The snowstorm dumped twelve inches of snow on the interstate highway therefore, the state police closed the road.
14. Professors are supposed to be absent-minded and since I've been in college I've discovered this is true.
15. The suspect said he had never met the victim however, the detective knew this was a lie.
16. In the first place, it was snowing too hard to see the road in the second place, we had no chains.
17. I have read *Soul on Ice* but I have not read *The Invisible Man*.
18. San Francisco is my favorite city consequently, I hope to spend two weeks there this summer.
19. The quarterback made a brilliant pass and the end crossed the goal line for the winning touchdown.
20. Large supermarkets are fascinating for you can find in them everything from frozen chow mein to soybean flour.
21. Ron and Mike were both in English class this morning they gave interesting reports.
22. The man in the gray suit is Mr. Klinger and he is running for the Senate next year.
23. Riding a bicycle is excellent exercise I ride mine every day.
24. I am not interested in a trip to the Orient this year however, I would like to go to Europe.
25. He can type very rapidly but he is not good at shorthand.
26. Jack's wallet was stolen at the airport consequently, his father wired him the money for his trip.
27. Katherine has given up smoking about five times but she cannot seem to break the habit.
28. Keeping up with the work for three college courses is a challenge and Jack seems to enjoy it.
29. Our dog seems to have a built-in alarm clock he wakes us up at exactly the same time every morning.
30. The passengers on the plane were not terribly alarmed by the loss of altitude and the pilot and the crew kept them calm.
31. I realized at once that something was wrong I was not, however, the only person who was frightened.
32. I had to complete the assignment by Friday or I would have failed the course.
33. Ralph decided to be a chemist but he changed his mind after taking Chem. 121.
34. I finished reading *Time* magazine and then I went to bed.
35. We always go to the mountains in the fall they are at their prettiest that time of year.
36. Tim went to the candy store often the clerk knew his name.
37. At the airport we met several of our friends therefore, we did not mind waiting for the overdue plane.
38. The police officer stopped the two men and he asked whether they needed help.
39. The office was closed consequently, I could not pay my bill.
40. The air was beautifully clear it was a lovely day.