

## Punctuation Makes Communication Easier: Commas after Dependent Clauses

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Punctuation guidelines often may seem bothersome, but punctuation actually makes communication easier!

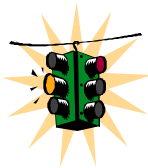
### **NOTE THESE TERMS:**

**Clause** --A clause is a group of words consisting of a subject and a verb (that can be conjugated). Clauses are to be distinguished from phrases, which also are groups of words, but which do not have a subject and verb.

**Subordinator** --The prefix “sub” (meaning under) indicates to readers that the clause the subordinator introduces is not the main clause, but the “subordinated” or dependent one.

**One way a comma is used is to signal** a pause after a clause that begins with a subordinator. Some subordinating words are--

- when
- while
- although
- since
- if
- because



Commas are like traffic signals that help readers “travel” through a text. Notice how commas separate the subordinated clause from the main clause in the following sentences:

1. When appraisals are created or revised  they should be tested using certain criteria.


When appraisals are created or revised, they should be tested using certain criteria.

2. While Quanisha was working  Jane telephoned from Amsterdam.


While Quanisha was working , Jane telephoned from Amsterdam.

3. Although Tim played for the Detroit Pistons  he doesn't play pro-basketball now.

Although Tim played for the Detroit Pistons , he doesn't play pro-basketball now.

4. Since Tori graduated in May  she is eligible for and is receiving the prize.

Since Tori graduated in May , she is eligible for and is receiving the prize.

5. If Aisha flies to Rome  then the plan will work!

If Aisha flies to Rome , then the plan will work!

6. Because Wang Fang studied in Xi'an  he can work in the writing center.

Because Wang Fang studied in Xi'an , he can work in the writing center.

### Activity:

*Place commas between the two clauses in the following sentences, so the meaning is clear for a reader. (Answers follow the activity.)*

1. Because Lyndell showed Debbie how to input data Debbie's job became easier.
2. If Lucie's plan works we'll all go to the writing center conference.
3. Since Sue reads so much professional literature she can provide a lot of insight at staff meetings.
4. Because the budget was cut the writing center will limit its hours.
5. If Monica uses commas in expected places in her text a reader will have better understanding of her ideas.

**Answers:**

1. Because Lyndell showed Debbie how to input data, Debbie's job became easier.
2. If Lucie's plan works, we'll all go to the writing center conference.
3. Since Sue reads so much professional literature, she can provide a lot of insight at staff meetings.
4. Because the budget was cut, the writing center will limit its hours.
5. If Monica uses commas in expected places in her text, a reader will have better understanding of her ideas.

