

INSIDE PUNCTUATION

Observe the following rules for punctuation within a sentence:

- (1) Most modifiers are an essential part of the message. They blend into the sentence without a break. Often a modifier will help us single out an individual or narrow down a group. Such modifiers limit the range of the word they modify; they are **restrictive**. Restrictive modifiers tell us *which one* or *what kind*. Do not set them off by commas.

Restrictive: The fellow *playing the kazoo* had bright red hair. (Which one?)
The people *trapped in the building* were crying for help.
(What people?)
He showed us a small topical flower *smelling like a rose*. (What kind?)

When we already know which one or what kind, a modifier may merely add optional information. Use *commas* to set off such **nonrestrictive** modifiers from the rest of the sentence.

Nonrestrictive: The janitor, *trapped in the building*, was crying for help.
Karen, *backed into a corner*, glared at the other girls.
We had just moved into the new high school, *a bare modern building*.
She walked into the room happy, *smelling like a rose*.

Modifiers may be clauses starting with *who* (*whom*, *whose*), *which*, or *that*. These words are relative pronouns, and the clauses they start are called **relative clauses**. Relative clauses are restrictive when they tell us which one or what kind. They are nonrestrictive when they modify something that has already been sufficiently identified.

Restrictive: The two men *who robbed the store* were never found. (Which ones?)

Nonrestrictive: The second robber, *who had served as lookout*, got away.

Restrictive: The woman *who runs the computer* is going to quit. (White one?)

Nonrestrictive: Phyllis, *who runs our computer*, is going to quit.

Restrictive: He took a picture of the horse *that had won the race*. (Which one?)

Nonrestrictive: She showed me their horses, *which were sleek and well fed*.

- (2) Set off introductory modifiers (especially prepositional phrases) when they run to three words or more. Set off a verbal (*-ing* form or *to* form) that starts a sentence as a **sentence modifier**.

Prep. Phrase: *For the first time*, they were satisfied. *In that case*, we will comply.

Verbal: *Smiling*, he tore up the check. *To save face*, they made a token payment.

- (3) Use *commas* to separate three or more sentence parts of the same kind that form a **series**.

Series: He *smiled*, *shook hands*, and *bowed*.

The shantytowns were *hot*, *crowded*, and *filthy*.

War, *hunger*, and *disease* have been humanity's constant companions.

Pollsters find out what Americans *think, love, hate, eat, drink, and smoke*.

- (4) Use *commas* to separate the different parts of dates and addresses. (A comma also separates the last part from the rest of the sentence if the sentence continues.) Use commas also to separate the parts of measurements, but do not use an additional comma if the sentence goes on.

Commas: Faith was born on *Tuesday, July 4, 1976*, in *Sacramento, California*.
Two feet, three inches was a record for this kind of fish.

- (5) Use a *comma* between two adjectives if the word *and* could take the place of the comma. We call such adjectives **coordinate** adjectives. They work together and are interchangeable.

Comma: We played on a *hot, windy* day. (*a windy, hot* day)
They were *proud, ambitious* people. (*ambitious, proud* people)

- (6) Use the colon to mean “namely” or “as follows” after a statement that promises specifics:

Colon: There was a chapel for each sect: Quakers, Methodists, Baptists. (enumeration)
What she needed most she could not get: love. (identification)

Put commas where needed. Use the colon where appropriate.

1. Hacking away at the tangled growth ____ Sterling Worthborn ____ cleared a path.
2. He put down the machete ____ straightened his back ____ and wiped his forehead.
3. Smoke drifted across from Mount Machimba ____ the unusually active volcano.
4. The village chief ____ seated on the dirt floor ____ listened to the strange visitor.
5. It was ____ Sunday ____ October 1 ____ a major holiday for the tribe.
6. A dozen years ago ____ Dr. Spelworst ____ a famous scientist ____ had disappeared into the jungles ____ surrounding Mount Machimba.
7. Worthborn had taught English in Lafayette ____ Indiana ____ and Buffalo ____ New York.
8. Sterling ____ suspecting Spelworst of treachery ____ advanced slowly ____ into the cave.
9. Kintu ____ his trusted guide ____ had found the secret of the mountain ____ gold?
10. Cackling wildly ____ the mad scientist reached for the lever ____ activating the trap door.
11. An avalanche of dirt ____ rocks ____ and trees ____ came down the mountain.
12. Caught off guard ____ Sterling Worthborn was buried ____ under tons of debris.
13. He left his collection of books ____ to the library ____ under tons of debris.
14. Mount Mochimba ____ last erupted on February 17 ____ 1898.
15. According to the tribe ____ Dr. Spelworst lives on ____ buried under the lava.