

## Punctuation Rule #2-Commas for Items in a Series

Use a comma to separate items in a series.

Magazines, paperback novels, and textbooks crowded the shelves.  
Pat sat in the doctor's office, checked her watch, and smoked nervously.  
Jane bit into the ripe, juicy apple.  
More and more people entered the crowded, noisy stadium.

### Note

A comma is used between two descriptive words in a series only if *and* inserted between the words sounds natural. You could say:

Jane bit into the ripe **and** juicy apple.  
More and more people entered the crowded **and** noisy stadium.

But notice in the following sentences that the descriptive words do not sound natural when *and* is inserted between them. In such cases, no comma is used.

The model wore a light sleeveless blouse. ("A light *and* sleeveless blouse")  
Dr. Light noticed two tiny puncture marks on his patient's neck. ("Two *and* tiny puncture marks")

**Directions: Place commas between items in a series.**

1. Becky brought a cake iced with red white and blue frosting to the Fourth of July picnic.
2. My brother did the laundry helped clean the apartment waxed the car and watched ABC's *Wide World of Sports*.
3. You can make a Big Mac by putting two all-beef patties special sauce lettuce cheese pickles and onion on a sesame-seed bun.
4. During the summer the workers had installed a new gymnasium floor an improved heating system and chalkboards in the high school.
5. He wore a bright blue blazer.
6. She was an alert vivacious girl.
7. We patiently sat through a long dull amateurish performance.
8. It was a cold raw dark November day.

(over)

9. We walked we played we ate and we gained weight.
10. She is a bright charming talented young woman.
11. The weather forecaster predicted rain or sleet or snow.
12. The wind froze us the rain soaked us and the waves tossed us.
13. Everyone turned to watch the large pale yellow moon.
14. The food was greasy tasteless and insufficient for our hunger.
15. We searched under the rug behind the pictures and in the desk drawers.
16. Dogs children and clowns were suddenly mixed in a tangled mass.
17. The old car coughed lurched forward then shuddered to an obstinate standstill.
18. We swam and ate and slept for five days.
19. The loud irritating noise persisted ally day.
20. Turn left at the big red barn.
21. The room was large cheerful and tastefully decorated.

**Cross out the one comma that is not needed. Add the one comma that is needed between items in a series.**

1. Cold eggs burnt bacon, and watery orange juice are the reasons, I've never returned to that diner for breakfast.
2. Bill relaxes, by reading Donald Duck Archie, and Bugs Bunny comic books.
3. Tonight I've got to work at the restaurant for three hours finish writing a paper, and study, for an exam.