

*Why English punctuation
matters*

Let's eat grandpa.

Let's eat, grandpa.

A woman without her man is
nothing.

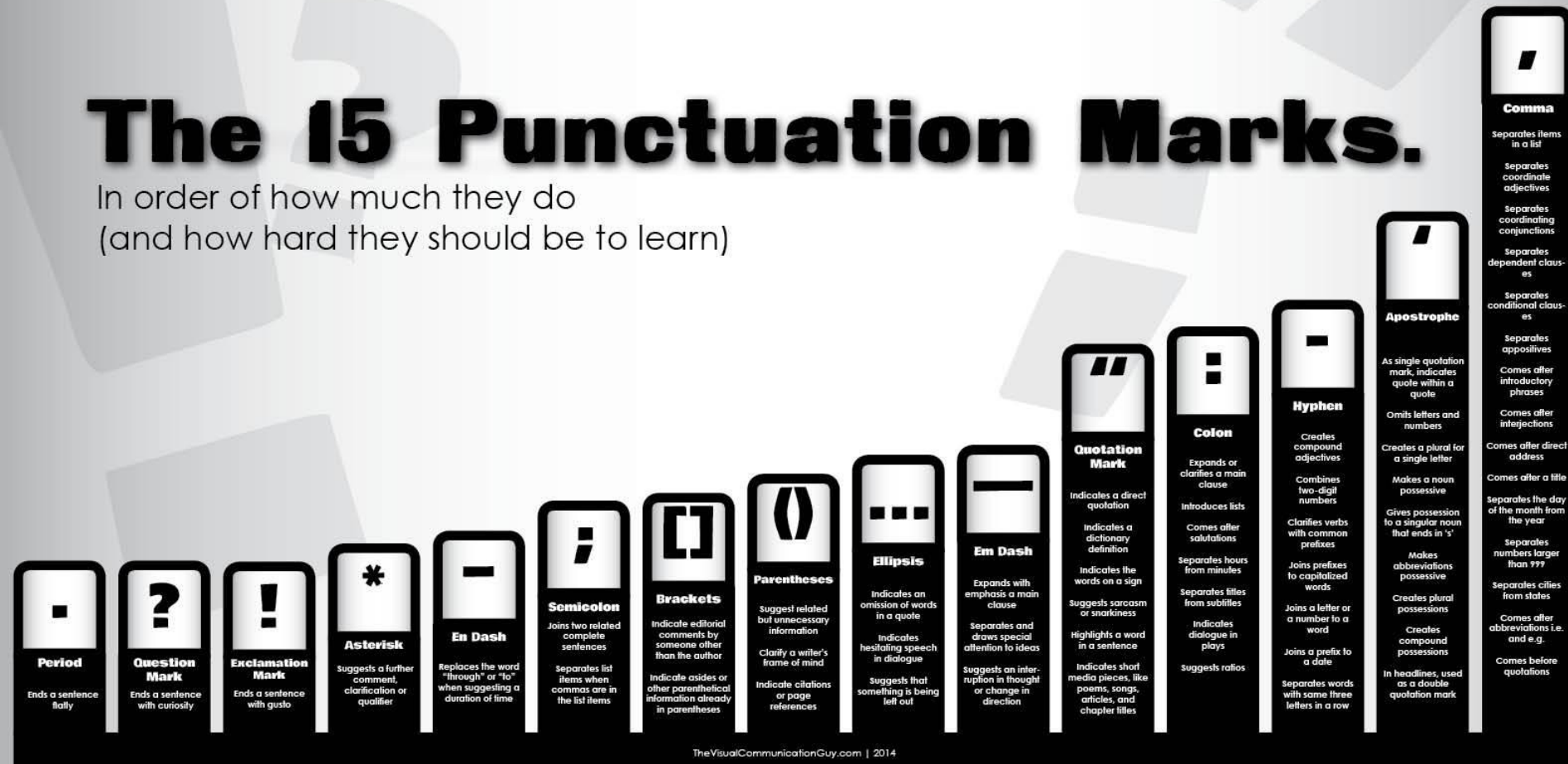
A woman, without her, man is

What are the 15 punctuation marks?



The 15 Punctuation Marks.

In order of how much they do
(and how hard they should be to learn)



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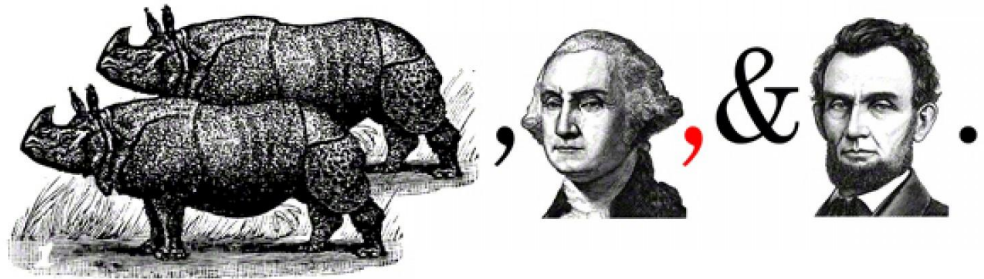
Period, question mark, exclamation mark, asterisk, en dash, semicolon, brackets, parenthesis, ellipsis, em dash, quotation mark, colon, hyphen, apostrophe, comma

The Oxford Comma

A serial comma (also called Oxford comma) is a comma placed before the coordinating conjunction (usually and, or, or nor) in a series of three or more terms to separate items on a list.

With the **Oxford Comma**:

We invited the rhinoceri, Washington, and Lincoln.



Without the Oxford Comma:

We invited the rhinoceri, Washington and Lincoln.



Examples?

With the Oxford comma:
we invited the strippers, jfk, and stalin.



Without the Oxford comma:
we invited the strippers, jfk and stalin.



How else can we use a comma?

- To separate phrases, words or clauses (sentences) in **lists**.
- A list of **adjectives** usually requires commas (interchangeable). However, if an adjective is **modifying** another adjective you do not separate them with a comma

Anya is fun, bright, beautiful, intelligent.

BUT We stayed at an expensive summer resort.

Tip: when in doubt replace the comma with "and"

Enclosing details

- Use a comma to enclose non-defining relative clauses and other non-essential details and comments. The comma is placed **on either side** of the insertion.

Finals, one of the most exhausting weeks of my life, are finally over.

Cats, unlike dogs, are useless.

My friend, Anya, is groovy.

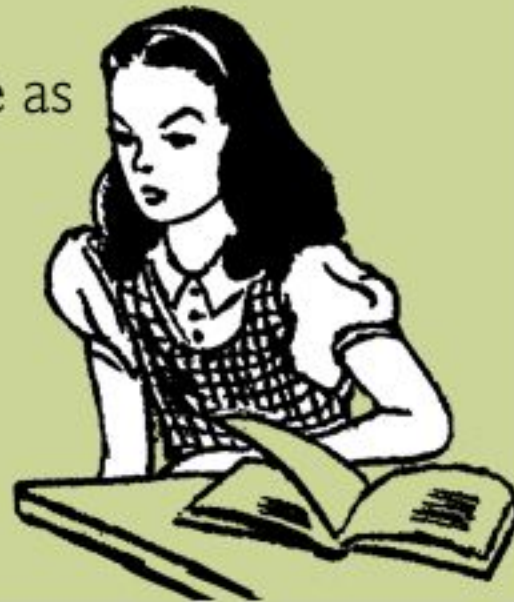
- Tag questions

She does not attend classes often, does she?

- Interjections

Yes, I will stay in bed a little longer, thank you.

I've rejected using the Oxford
comma ever since
Oxford rejected me as
an undergrad.



Separation of clauses

- After **subordinate clauses** at the start of sentences.

When the bell rang, we all left the classroom

(**BUT** we all left the classroom when the bell rang)

... and even more clauses

- Separating of **two independent clauses** with subjects joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) before the conjunction

Mary walked to the party, but **she** was unable to walk home.

(**BUT** Mary walked to the party but was unable to walk home.)

Adverbs + Comma

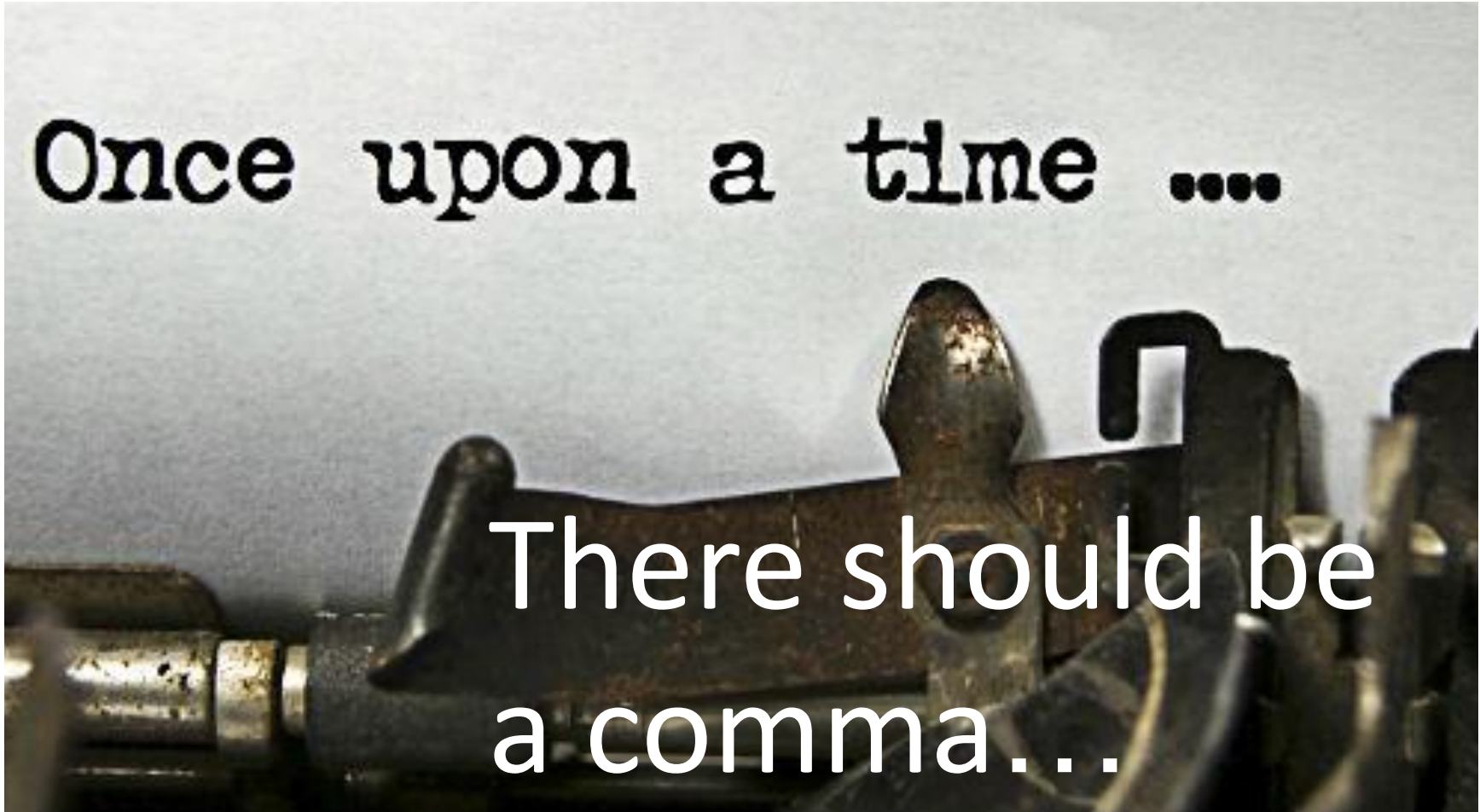
- Commas are always used to set off certain adverbs at the beginning of a sentence, including **however**, **in fact**, **therefore**, **nevertheless**, **moreover**, **furthermore**, **hopefully** and **still**.

Therefore, a comma would be appropriate in this sentence.

In fact, I will use one right now.

- If these adverbs appear in the middle of a sentence, they are followed and preceded by a comma
- Using commas to offset certain adverbs is optional, including **then**, **so**, **yet**, **instead**, and **too** (meaning also).

Introductory phrases + comma



Once upon a time

There should be
a comma...

Quotation mark + comma

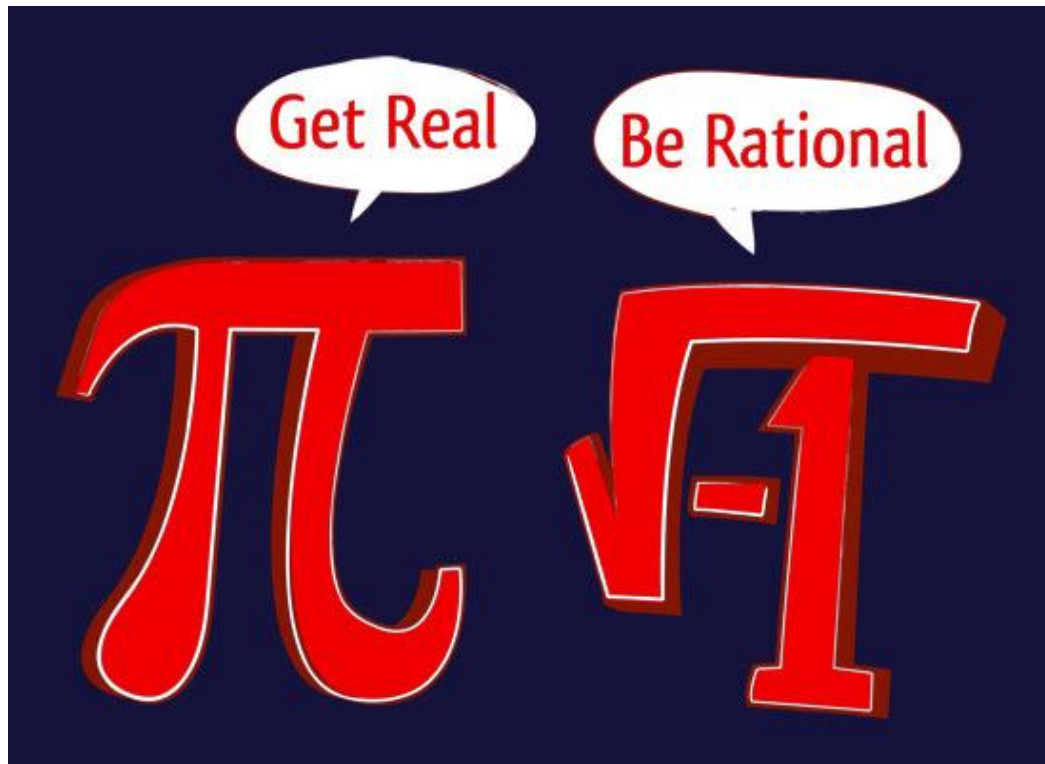
- In American English, the comma is commonly included **inside** a quotation mark:

My mother gave me the nickname "Bobby Bobby Bob Bob Boy," which really made me angry.

- However, in British English, punctuation is placed **within** quotation marks only if it is part of what is being quoted or referred to:

My mother gave me the nickname "Bobby Bobby Bob Bob Boy", which really made me angry.

We DON'T use commas in decimal numbers, we use dots
(4.7 not 4,7)



Colon is used when

- The colon **expands** on the sentence that precedes it, often introducing a **list** that demonstrates or **elaborates** whatever was previously stated.

Olga procrastinates by watching TV shows:
Doctor Who, How to get away with murder,
Community, etc.

Parentheses and brackets must never be used interchangeably.

- Use parentheses to **enclose information** that clarifies or is used as an aside. The use of parentheses indicates that the writer considered the information **less important**—almost an afterthought.

Example: He finally answered (after taking five minutes to think) that he did not understand the question.

- Brackets are interruptions. When we see them, we know they've been added **by someone else**. They are used to explain or comment on the quotation.

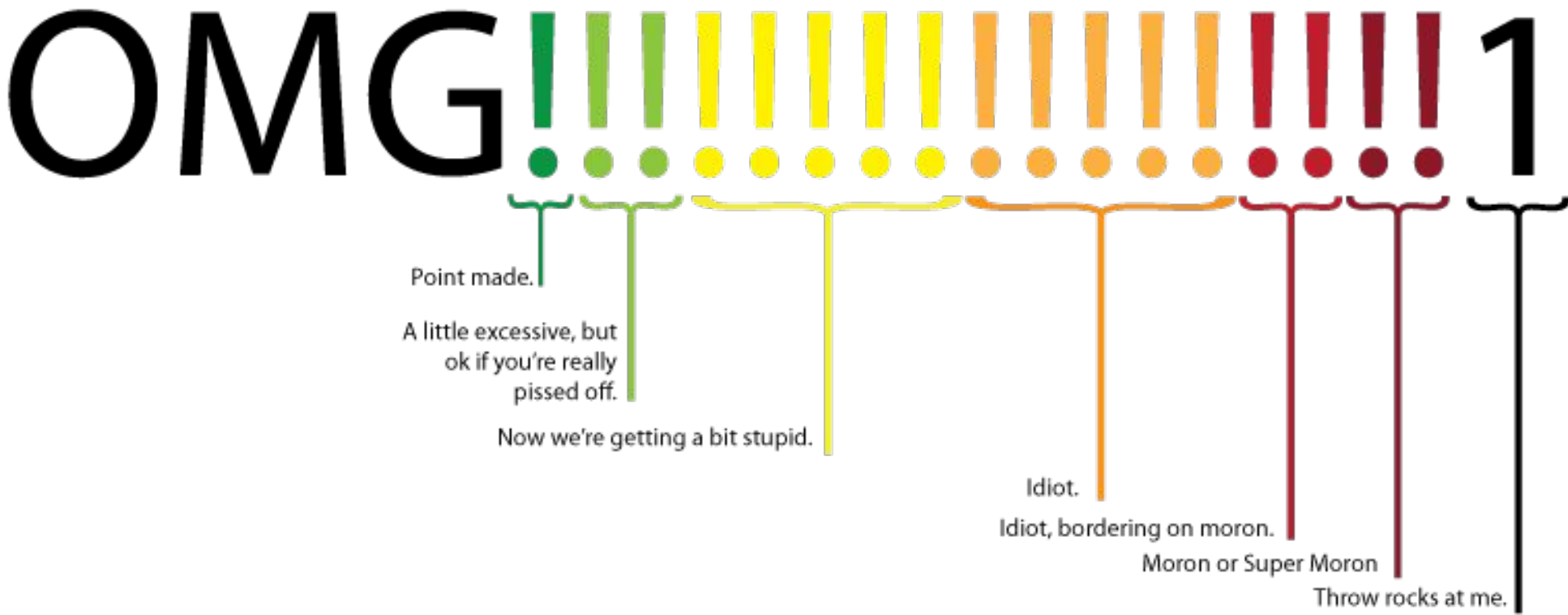
Examples:

"Four score and seven [today we'd say eighty-seven] years ago..."

"Bill shook hands with [his son] Al."

Exclamation Points

- Avoid using an exclamation point in formal business writing. Overuse of exclamation points is a sign of undisciplined writing. The writer F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, "An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke."



How to use a semicolon

The most feared punctuation on earth

Created by The Oatmeal

<http://theoatmeal.com>



“ Using a semicolon isn't hard; I once saw a party gorilla do it. ”

Why

What's the point of a semicolon?

The most common way to use a semicolon is to connect two independent clauses. For example:

“ The ice cream truck man drove by my house today. He had big hairy knuckles. ”

The two statements are separated by a period. If read aloud, it would go something like this:

*“ The ice cream truck man drove by my house today. *take a breath* He had big hairy knuckles. ”*

With a semicolon, however, it would sound like this:

“ The ice cream truck man drove by my house today; he had big hairy knuckles. ”

Basically what we did was eliminate the pause between the two statements without using words such as *and*, *but*, *nor*, or *yet*.



How

How do I use a semicolon?

If you have two independent clauses, meaning they could stand alone as their own sentences, it's ok to use a semicolon. For example:



“ My aunt also had hairy knuckles; she loved to wash and comb them. ”

This is an independent clause, meaning it could stand alone as a complete sentence.

This is also an independent clause; it could exist without being attached to its predecessor.

Don't

Don't use it with conjunctions.

Conjunctions are words like *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*.

“ My aunt's hairy knuckles are magnificent indeed, but I have no desire to stroke them. ”

A comma is used because there's a *but* separating the two clauses.



The End



“Godzilla is a misunderstood creature; beneath his raging desire to set people on fire and eat them lies a gentle giant who just wants to cuddle.”

orange is the new black

