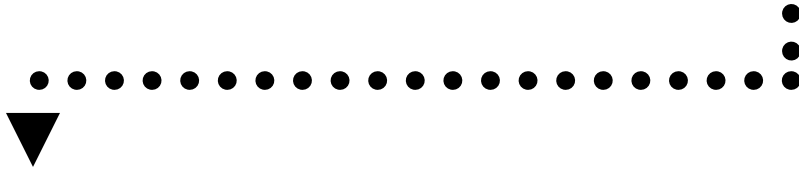


COMMA TIP 7



Know the difference between **so** and **so that** before you add a comma.

So, a coordinating conjunction, can join two main clauses¹. The pattern looks like this:

MAIN CLAUSE + , + **so** + **MAIN CLAUSE** .

Katherine recently adopted a Great Dane puppy, **so** she spends considerable time wiping up puddles of dog urine with a sponge.

Mike agreed to help Helen move to her new apartment, **so** he spent Saturday lifting heavy furniture and struggling with unwieldy boxes.

Johnny drives an ancient Buick with no air conditioning, **so** he must use the strongest antiperspirant on the market.

So that, on the other hand, is a subordinate conjunction that introduces a subordinate clause.² The pattern looks like this:

MAIN CLAUSE + ∅ + **so that** + **SUBORDINATE CLAUSE** .

The new puppy whines pathetically **so that** Katherine will let it sleep on the bed.

Mike soaked in a hot bath **so that** his aching back would relax.

During the summer, Johnny drives with a big cup of ice **so that** he doesn't overheat and pass out in the hot car.

So that can confuse writers because the **that** is optional. When the **that** is missing, don't mistake **so that** for **so**, thus adding incorrect punctuation.

Angie peeled away the crispy chicken skin **so** [or **so that**] she could later eat a brownie without concerns about the calories.

Before beginning his daydream, Frank opened his literature book **so** [or **so that**] he appeared to be paying attention to the discussion.

Unconcerned about small children or kittens, Carlotta recklessly sped through the residential neighborhood **so** [or **so that**] she would be home in time to watch *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, her favorite TV show.

¹ A main clause follows this pattern: **subject + verb = complete thought**. Every sentence must contain at least one main clause.

² A subordinate clause follows this pattern: **subordinate conjunction + subject + verb ≠ complete thought**.

Quick Test

Directions: Add commas where they are necessary.

1. Robbie bought a small microwave for his first apartment □ so he could cook popcorn and macaroni and cheese, the only meals he could afford.
2. Sylvia wore flat shoes on her date with Tony □ so she wouldn't intimidate this short young man with her height.
3. Yuko bought a small aquarium and some goldfish □ so her apartment wouldn't feel so lonely.
4. Patrick always carries an English handbook with him, even to basketball games □ so that he can check other people's grammar wherever he goes.
5. Rachel neglected to make her car payment three months in a row □ so she must hide her car in friends' garages in an attempt to foil the repo man.



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