



Punctuation: commas (,)

Punctuation marks help the reader to clarify meaning and also to establish the tone of the text they are reading. They are therefore really important marks for you to learn how to use correctly in your writing.

Commas are separation marks and are used to indicate a short break in a sentence. The current accepted style is to use them as little as possible and only when they are needed to help the reader understand the meaning more clearly. If you read your work aloud you will be able to hear a slight pause where you should make a break with a comma in your writing.

1. Use commas to separate items in a list so that the meaning is clear *

Examples:

- Shabani is an enthusiastic, dedicated, hardworking student.
- Foods like chocolate, buns, icecream and cake have a high sugar and fat content.

*Do not use commas before the 'and' in the last item in a list.

2. A comma is usually placed either after, or before and after, a link word or phrase

Examples:

- *Nevertheless*, the ethical issues associated with gene therapy must still be addressed.
- It is clear, *on the other hand*, that its application will save many lives.

3. A comma can be used to separate main ideas in a sentence from additional phrases or clauses

Example:

After his appearance before the tribunal, Nicolae refused to discuss the matter with the press.

4. Use commas to separate ideas in compound sentences where two or more clauses are joined together by 'and', 'but' or 'for'

Example:

- Kim (2001, p65) adds that for managers to be successful the core competency needed is the ability to focus on a sound plan, but she does not explain this further.

5. Commas are generally used to introduce a quotation

Example:

- According to Shakespeare, 'All the world's a stage.'

Activity

Decide where the commas need to be placed in the following paragraph.

Supportive communication therefore is not seen just as a ‘nice person technique’ but a proven competitive advantage for both managers and organisations. Moreover delivering outstanding customer service is almost impossible without supportive communication. According to Kember (1999, p 15) communication skills ‘...may actually be significantly more important than cognitive ability and technical expertise combined.’

See answers below

Answers

Supportive communication, therefore, is not seen just as a ‘nice person technique’, but a proven, competitive advantage for both managers and organisations. Moreover, delivering outstanding customer service is almost impossible without supportive communication. According to Kember (1999, p 15), communication skills ‘...may actually be significantly more important than cognitive ability and technical expertise combined.’

Useful links *(all open in a new window)*

There may be resources that have been created with your lecturers, addressing assignment tasks and topics specific to your courses. Follow the links below to find out:

[Business](#)

[Education, Arts and
Social Sciences](#)

[Health Sciences](#)

[IT, Engineering and the
Environment](#)