



Lecture 10

Punctuation Pitfalls of scientific English

PUNCTUATION

Use of the comma

- Separate main clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions
- Separate linking words from the main idea of the sentence
- Separate subordinate clauses when they precede the main clause
- Separate things, concepts, events, ideas in lists

Conjunctions

Coordinating

FANBOYS

for, and, nor, but,
or, yet, so,

Subordinating

after, although, as, as if,
as long as, as much as,
as soon as, as though,
because, before, by the
time, even if, even
though, if, in order that,
in case, lest, once, only
if, provided that, since,
so that

Use a comma to link independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*)

- Women go to the doctor, **but** men go to the pub.
- Johnson (2010) was the first to notice this effect, **and** Watson (2012) elaborate on the implications.

(not in contractions: These scientists state a lot but prove nothing.)

Fanboys

FANBOYS take a comma if they link clauses, but not if they link words or phrases:

- They used both approximations **and** surrogate models to address dimensionality issues.
- It is difficult to determine whether stress is the cause **or** the result of these factors.

Linking words as starters: comma

- Despite the succes,
- Nevertheless,
- In addition,
- Furthermore,
- To sum up,

Linking words in the middle of the sentence: two commas

- Our findings, however, did not support...
- We could, of course, use the same sample.
- Our research students, for example, were...

Seperate extra information

- After a carefully orchestrated coup, the rebels....
- In the most remote areas of Russia,

Subordinate clauses in front of a main clause

- Although Fred beats his dog, he is a nice guy.
- In order to be able to address both problems, we made an analysis of
- Unless you need a break, I will continue.

Subordinate clause after main clause

No comma:

- Fred is a nice guy since he helped me out.
- Fred loves his dog as much as he loves his wife.
- Our results were spectacular because they demonstrated how....

BUT: While, whereas and although

... are **always** preceded by a comma:

- Fred is a nice guy, although he beats his dog.
- Our results were spectacular, whereas our expectations were low.
- The number of accidents has increased, while the number of fatalities has decreased.

Use of semicolon

- When the second clause elaborates on the first
- The two are closely connected: full stop would be too much
- Often: contrast or comparison between the two clauses

Use of the semi-colon as a style feature

The original studies examined here offered tentative evidence; the replications we conducted offered additional, confirmatory evidence.

In some cases, the replications increase confidence in the reliability of the original results; in other cases, the replications suggest that more investigation is needed to establish the validity of the original findings.

Science does not always provide comfort for what we wish to be; it confronts us with what is.

— — ,, or (.....)

— — Dashes: emphasis
,, Commas: neutral
(.....) Brackets: background

- The method – now widely accepted – was still in its developmental stages during Brown’s research.
- The participants, 33 males and 17 females, were asked to...
- Not all adjectives come before the noun: some Latin phrases (such as *in vivo*) follow the English noun.

(Non)restrictive clauses



which or that? (no)comma?

1. We emphasize that companies (-) which/that are focused on stock management (-) need significantly less external finance than A and B type companies.
2. The study by McMillan (-) which/that reviews this principle most extensively, dates from 2005.

The (non)restrictive clause

1. Land which (that) is surrounded by water is an island.
2. Tasmania, which is surrounded by the waters of Bass Strait, is an island of great natural beauty.

1. Land **which (that)** is surrounded by water is an island.
No comma: defining clause (essential for meaning)

2. Tasmania, **which** is surrounded by the waters of Bass Strait, is an island of great natural beauty.
Comma: non-defining clause (not essential)

UK: 'which' or 'that' in defining clauses & 'which' in non-defining

US: only 'that' in defining clauses & 'which' in non-defining

- <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/usage/that-or-which>

DANGLING PARTICIPLES

What's wrong?

- Swinging from tree to tree, we watched the monkeys at the zoo.

What's wrong?

- Swinging from tree to tree, we watched the monkeys at the zoo.
- Filled with gas, we were able to drive our car all the way to Paris.

What's wrong?

- Swinging from tree to tree, we watched the monkeys at the zoo.
- Filled with gas, we were able to drive our car all the way to Paris.
- Taped to the door, I wrote a note that I would return shortly.

What's wrong?

Using an in-house developed script, a global computational analysis was performed.

OK

A global computational analysis was performed
with the use of an in-house developed script.

OR

We used an in-house developed script to
perform a global computational analysis.

*Many dangling modifiers result
from the use of the passive voice*

- ✓ After separating the participants into groups, I tested Group A.
- ✗ After separating the participants into groups, Group A was tested.
[I, not Group A, separated the participants into groups.]

- ✓ Using this procedure, I tested the participants.
- ✗ The participants were tested using this procedure.
[I, not the participants, used the procedure.]

- ✓ To test this hypothesis, we divided the participants into two groups.
- ✗ To test this hypothesis, the participants were divided into two groups.
[We, not the participants, tested the hypothesis.]

- ✓ Based on this assumption, the model...
- ✗ Based on this assumption, I developed a model...
[The model, not I, was based on this assumption.]

How to repair?

Reviewing the available data, the cause of the accident was mechanical, not chemical.

How to repair?

Blood flow was allowed to return to baseline before proceeding with the next occlusion.