

Commas with Items in a Series

11f. Use commas to separate items in a series.

EXAMPLES She has a collection of books, magazines, postcards, and letters. [Commas separate each item in the list of words within the sentence.]
 Did you look in the closet, on the desk, and under the sofa? [Each of the phrases within the question is a separate item, so commas separate them.]
 Houses and apartments make up the suburban core, inner-city businesses thrive, and commuters pack the freeways. [A comma separates the first two independent clauses of the list, and a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction separates the second and third independent clauses of the list.]

REMINDER If all the items in a series are joined by *and*, *or*, or *nor*, commas are not needed to separate the items.

EXAMPLE I will use pens **or** pencils **or** markers. [Because all items in the series are joined by *or*, no commas are needed to separate them.]

EXERCISE A Each of the following sentences contains items in a series. If the items require commas to separate them, insert commas where needed. If the items are already correctly punctuated, write *C* on the line provided.

Examples _____ 1. We stood up, we clapped, and we cheered. [The three independent clauses should be separated by commas.]

_____ *C* 2. Lakes and rivers and oceans help produce rain. [The conjunction *and* joins each item in the list, so the items should not be separated by commas.]

_____ 1. Grandmother photographs family events prepares a scrapbook for each grandchild keeps a journal of vacation trips and attends most of our games. [Are the items in the list of Grandmother's activities clearly separated from each other?]

_____ 2. Put the tomato plants the bags of mulch the hose and the small shovel into the wheelbarrow. [Is each item in the list of gardening supplies clearly separated from the next?]

_____ 3. The musicians could be heard in the yard in the garden and throughout the house.

_____ 4. Neither bees nor hornets nor wasps live in our attic.

_____ 5. Alexandra Maria Kimi and Andrea are moving to new desks.

_____ 6. Lightning flashed thunder boomed the wind howled and rain pelted the windows.

_____ 7. Crickets will chirp rustle around in the dry leaves hop from corner to corner and sing through the night.

for CHAPTER 11: PUNCTUATION **pages 272–73** *continued*

- _____ 8. Borrowing money or lending it or spending too much can cause financial woes.
- _____ 9. In the yard were four lawn chairs two tables and one open umbrella.
- _____ 10. I have cleaned the portable grill, Dan has packed the tent, and Lisa has made sandwiches and potato salad.

11f(3). Use commas to separate two or more adjectives preceding a noun.

Do not use a comma between the last adjective in the series and the noun the adjectives modify.

EXAMPLE Sometimes I enjoy singing the driving, progressive, heartfelt songs from his new CD. [Commas separate each item in the series of adjectives preceding the noun *songs*, but there is no comma between *heartfelt* and *songs*.]

REMINDER Do not use a comma before the last adjective in a series if the adjective is part of a compound noun.

EXAMPLE We'll hold the meeting in our large, comfortable living room. [No comma is needed to separate *comfortable* from *living* because *living room* is a compound noun.]

EXERCISE B Circle the letter of the sentence that is correctly punctuated in each of the following pairs.

Example 1. a. She lost a green, scuffed nylon wallet. [An additional comma is needed after *scuffed*.]

b. This is a warm, well-lit, cheery dining room. [Two or more adjectives precede the compound noun *dining room*, and commas separate each adjective.]

11. **a.** In which aisles can I find the dried, canned, and fresh beans?
b. Is this the shortest, quickest most direct route to Atlanta? [Which of the nouns, *beans* or *route*, is preceded by two or more adjectives that are correctly separated by commas?]
12. **a.** Just look at the simple colorful, effective, scenery in that play.
b. We enjoyed the intense, dynamic, honest performance of the actor.
13. **a.** Yellow red, and green lights blinked around them.
b. Bring a large, yellow, ruled notepad to class.
14. **a.** Nate's thoughtful, artistic writing earned him many admirers.
b. He wrote short, deeply moving, stories.
15. **a.** Have you seen Josh's sturdy, lightweight mountain bike?
b. Lynn gave her sister a dark, blue, angora, sweater.