**Commas**

Commas are used to help with meaning in a sentence and to reduce ambiguity.

Let’s eat Grandma. **Who are you eating?**

The doctor said the woman was upset. **Who was upset?**

They have informed me that there will be a fee for public liability insurance about which I have spoken to the treasurer Alison from the committee who has agreed that we as a committee could cover this fee from our estate funding. **Did you run out of breath?**

**4 ways to use commas**

1. *Extra information*

A BBC reporter, Mark Lacey, witnessed the crime.

Sometimes you need a connecting word, such as who or which, to make the sentence make sense.

Two boys**,** who cannot be named for legal reasons**,** have been arrested following this horrendous crime.

A quick way to check this is to see if the sentences make sense without the words between the commas.

**Two boys,** who cannot be named for legal reasons**,** **have been arrested following this horrendous crime.**

1. *Co-ordinating conjunctions/introductory information*

Used when you start a sentence with a co-ordinating conjunction, such as *because, although, while, when, despite, even though, if*

*When* I heard the news on the television, I was greatly distressed.

*Because* he was rich, he could fly first class.

Note that the introductory information can’t stand alone as a complete sentence (subordinate clause)

**When I heard the news on the television**, I was greatly distressed.

**Because he was rich**, he could fly first class.

Note also that if you re-order the sentence, it also makes sense. This makes it a compound sentence (see No 3).

I was greatly distressed when I heard the news on the television.

He could fly first class because he was rich.

1. *Compound sentence (FANBOYS)*

When you join two simple sentences with a FANBOYS conjunction, you make a compound sentence.

FANBOYS – *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*

Jack likes tea *and* Jill likes water.

Jack likes tea *but* Jill likes water

When sentences are simple, there is no need to use a comma. However, when they are longer and more complex, using a comma makes them more understandable.

Jack went up the hill with some water, *and* Jill joined him later.

Jack made a cup of tea for himself, *but* gave Jill a glass of water instead.

Jill dropped her water, so Jack got her another one.

1. *Lists*

You need commas between the items of a list – people, places, things,

But not between the last two

I need to some pens, pencils, paper and a calculator before I start my class.

Yesterday I went to work, played badminton, went to the pub and then went home.