How to use Commas with Compound Sentences and Coordinating Conjunctions!

Hmm. Comma . . . or no comma? Ask yourself these key questions: \

1. Is there a coordinating conjunction?

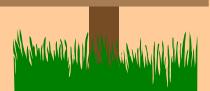
Here are your coordinating conjunctions:



But 0r Yet For And



2. Is the coordinating conjunction connecting two independent clauses?



Jason looked in the mirror but could not see himself.

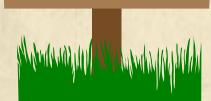
NO! The words "could not see himself" are not an independent clause. They can't stand alone. The coordinating conjunction is connecting two actions (verbs): "looked" and "could not see."

Jason looked in the mirror he could not see himself. but

YES! "Jason looked in the mirror" is an independent clause. So is "he could not see himself." The coordinating conjunction "but" is connecting two independent clauses.

3. Are the answers to #s 1 and 2 "yes"?

Then insert a comma BEFORE the coordinating conjunction.



Jason looked in the mirror | but



Independent Clause



Comma **BEFORE** Coordinating

Conjunction

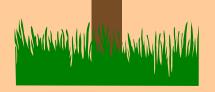
he could not see himself.



Independent Clause

4. Exception: Can you silently say "so that" instead of "so"?

If you can, then "so" is not a coordinating conjunction. No comma is needed.

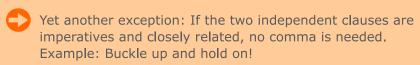


Jason looked in the mirror so he could enjoy the view.



Silent "that."

Another pesky exception: If the two independent clauses are short and parallel in construction, no comma is needed. Example: The rain fell and the wind blew.





* Notice that "because" is not on this list. It is not a coordinating conjunction. Unless you absolutely need a comma for clarity, do not insert one before the word "because."

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