

The background features a series of thick, diagonal stripes in various colors including purple, blue, green, yellow, and red. Interspersed among these stripes are numerous circles of different sizes and colors, some solid and some with a dotted pattern. The entire composition is set against a dark gray background and framed by a thin pink border.

Punctuate This!

Read the following sentence:

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

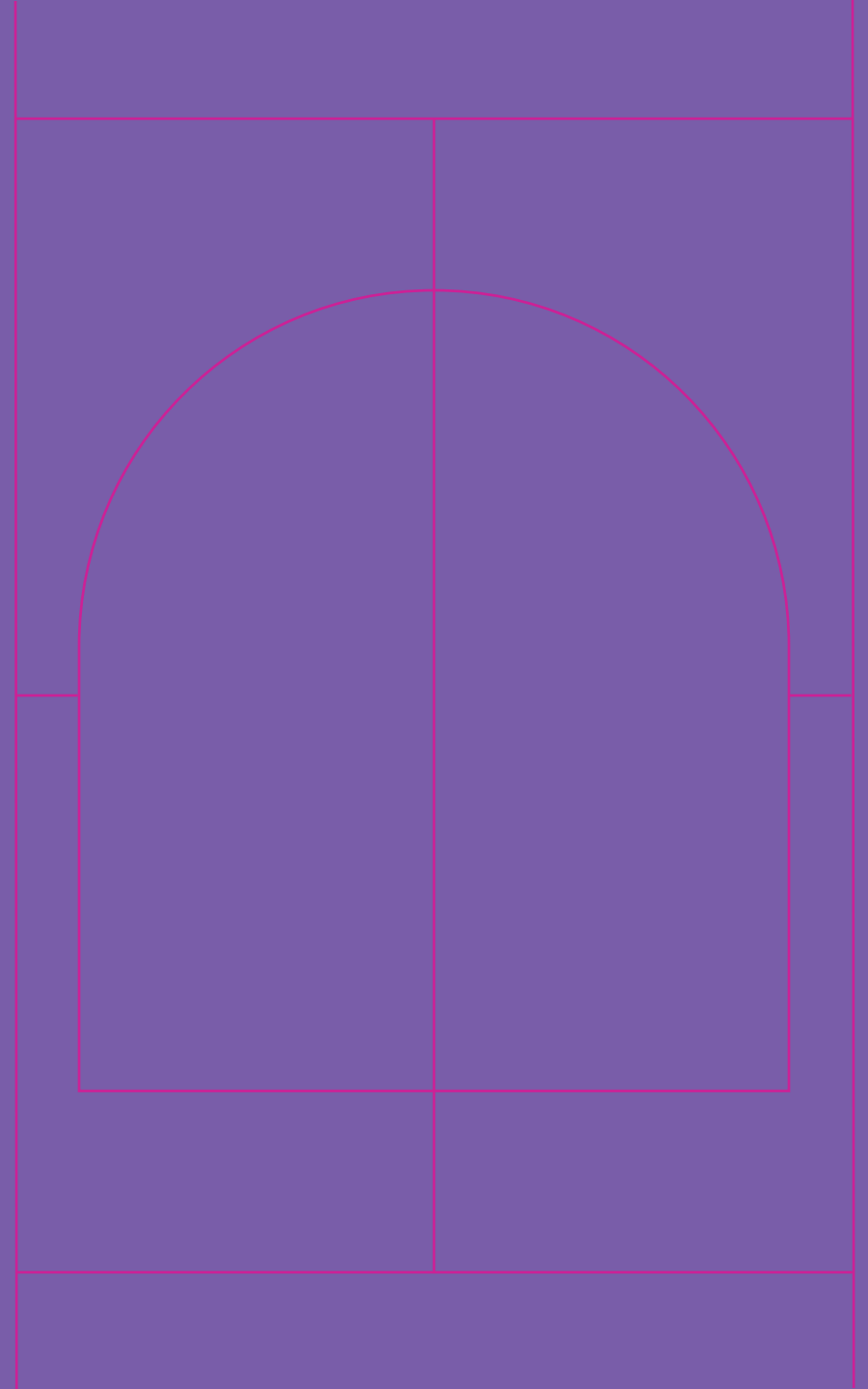
That is a long sentence!

Can you imagine if it weren't punctuated with commas? The commas help guide the reader through the sentence. The sentence is a compound-complex sentence filled with clauses and phrases. In this lesson, you will find out why it is so important to punctuate with the comma.

- A **comma** is a type of punctuation mark that is used in a sentence to help guide the reader. A comma indicates that a pause is needed.
- When you are writing a list of items, you insert commas to avoid confusion. For example:
 - *For my sixteenth birthday, I want to have a party and invite Mary Katherine Sophie Grace and Frances Ann Jennifer.*
 - How many people does she want to invite? Without the commas, there is no way to be sure. Note the difference in people.
 - *For my sixteenth birthday, I want to have a party and invite Mary Katherine, Sophie Grace, Frances Ann, and Jennifer.*

- *For my sixteenth birthday, I want to have a party and invite Mary Katherine, Sophie, Grace, Frances Ann, and Jennifer.*

- *For my sixteenth birthday, I want to have a party and invite Mary, Katherine, Sophie, Grace, Frances, Ann, and Jennifer.*



In writing, sometimes you have introductory phrases or clauses. Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of the sentence.

In the early afternoon, *I am usually extremely sleepy.*

There are several other rules for comma use. You will study all by the end of the term. Watch the videos below.

[Open How to Use Commas for Introductory Elements in a new tab](#)

Open How to Punctuate Items in a
Series in a new tab

- **Try It**

- Comma Rules

- It's Your Turn!

- Review the major comma rules and complete the exercises below.

- Comma Rule #1 exercise

- Comma Rule #2 exercise

- Comma Rule #3 exercise

- Comma Rule #4 exercise

- Comma Rule #5 exercise

