

The comma rules

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Discover the funny side of comma mistakes and learn to respect the comma.

– Anne Hodgson

1. *Eddie from the UK writes:*

- a. Dear Frank,
- b. Dear Frank:

Over the extended weekend some friends and I headed for the hills to go mountain biking."

2.

- a. "Alex, Ben, Charlie, Dave and I
- b. "Alex, Ben, Charlie, Dave, and I
spent three glorious days together doing offroad routes."

3. "The hostel we stayed at had a lovely breakfast buffet. We had a choice between

- a. fresh rolls, croissants, ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, and muesli."
- b. fresh rolls, croissants, ham and eggs, bacon and eggs and muesli."

4. "In the evening we watched a great old Peter Ustinov documentary that included his encounters with Nelson Mandela, an 800-year-old demigod and a dildo collector."

Eddie is

- a. clearly referring to three separate people, as listed.
- b. clearly referring to only one person, namely Nelson Mandela, who is an 800 year old demigod and collects dildos.
- c. clearly talking about two people: Nelson Mandela, who is an 800 year old demigod, and the dildo collector.
- d. ambiguous. We can't be sure how many people he is talking about.

5. *Eddie continues:*

- a. "Charlie whom I met back at engineering school is really into gadgets."
- b. "Charlie, whom I met back at engineering school is really into gadgets."
- c. "Charlie, whom I met back at engineering school, is really into gadgets."

6. "He has an onboard computer on his bike

- a. that registers every move we make."
- b. , that registers every move we make."

7. "On the first day, for example, we climbed exactly

- a. 1,000.64 metres.
- b. 1.000,64 metres.

The first kilometre was fine, but those last 64 cm almost killed me."

8. "Ben says that Charlie would fall off his bike without that computer."
a. "Charlie claims Ben would fall off his bike without that computer."
b. "Charlie, claims Ben, would fall off his bike without that computer."
9. "On the second day Alex
a. quit saying his left knee hurt
b. quit, saying his left knee hurt,
and went back to the hostel early."
10. "Still, he had a good day.
a. You see he met this girl named Tina."
b. You see, he met this girl named Tina."
11. "Tina, whose parents run the hostel, rarely gets out
a. and she obviously enjoys amusing company."
b. , and she obviously enjoys amusing company."
12. "Our man Alex didn't even think to ask
a. if she had a boyfriend."
b. , if she had a boyfriend."
13. "She does
a. of course
b. , of course,
and the boyfriend showed up later, so it was 'Eat, Pray, Live and Learn' for Alex."
14. "Anyway, by morning Alex had forgotten all about his 'knee trouble'
a. and joined us on the mountain
b. , and joined us on the mountain
for an absolutely perfect last day."

Answers:

1-a; 2-a; 3-a; 4-d; 5-c; 6-a; 7-a; 8-b; 9-b; 10-b; 11-b; 12-a; 13-b; 14-a
For detailed explanations to these answers, go to the interactive quiz at
<http://www.spotlight-online.de/language/grammar/the-comma-rules>