Commas in Compound Sentences

One common point of confusion among writers is when to place a comma in front of the coordinating conjunctions: **for**, **and**, **nor**, **but**, **or**, **yet**, **so** (FANBOYS).

A comma is used before these conjunctions when they are joining two complete sentences or independent clauses, as in: (Complete sentence)**,** FANBOYS (Complete sentence).

Example: Learning a foreign language can be very exciting, but it takes much time and effort.
(Complete sentence) **FANBOYS** **(Complete sentence)**

With short sentences, the comma can be omitted. Example: The computer crashed and I panicked.

Often, commas are mistakenly placed before a coordinating conjunction when the conjunction is joining compound verbs (two or more verbs) or noun (two or more nouns) phrases.

The following sentences should not contain commas:

(**verb**) (**verb**)
Martina decided to attend community college and work part-time while getting her degree.

(**noun**) (**noun**)
Diego wanted a new computer with state-of-the-art capabilities and a new iphone with the latest apps.

Practice

Decide if and where commas are needed in the following sentences.

1. She would have liked to have studied overseas but she didn't have the money to cover the expenses.
2. Many people understand what is wrong with their lives yet make no changes in their behaviors.
3. The store manager would not reschedule his employees nor provide them with longer breaks during their work days.
4. The BMW is an expensive car to own so prospective buyers should not go over budget.