

## PUNCTUATING A PAUSE: **COMMAS** and **DASHES**

Commas and dashes are used to indicate breaks or pauses within a sentence. They often set off additional related content, such as an aside, an explanation, an appositive, or a descriptive clause or phrase. Commas and dashes are used for slightly different purposes.

Authors use **commas** to indicate smaller, less disruptive breaks or pauses in a sentence.

Jade, my grandmother's pet parrot, is a green-cheeked conure.  
The infant chimpanzee, with its cuddly nature and cute pink face, easily won Anna's heart.

Authors use **dashes** to disrupt the flow of a sentence. Dashes can also be used to emphasize additional content.

This invention of yours—sadly overlooked by the judges—could someday change the world.  
Bananas and cucumbers are botanical berries—while blueberries and raspberries are not!

Rewrite each sentence with the additional information, selecting a comma or dash to indicate your desired level of pause. When adding in the additional information, remember to avoid misplaced modifiers. **Sample answers**

Ex: Bearded dragons sport beards of spikes under their chins. | which are among the most popular pet reptiles

Bearded dragons, which are among the most popular pet reptiles, sport beards of spikes under their chins.

1 Our puppy Moose is going to be an enormous dog. | already 110 pounds at just eight months old

Our puppy Moose—already 110 pounds at just eight months old—is going to be an enormous dog.

2 The U-2 spy plane is difficult for even the most experienced pilots to fly. | appropriately dubbed the Dragon Lady

The U-2 spy plane—appropriately dubbed the Dragon Lady—is difficult for even the most experienced pilots to fly.

3 The scouts went on a five-day float trip down the Colorado River. | accompanied by a group of chaperones and guides

The scouts, accompanied by a group of chaperones and guides, went on a five-day float trip down the Colorado River.

4 The goblin shark is a very primitive shark. | which can fling its needle-toothed jaw out of its mouth to catch prey

The goblin shark—which can fling its needle-toothed jaw out of its mouth to catch prey—is a very primitive shark.

5 Enormous chunks of ice drift along Iceberg Alley. | an area of the Atlantic stretching from the Arctic to Newfoundland

Enormous chunks of ice drift along Iceberg Alley, an area of the Atlantic stretching from the Arctic to Newfoundland.

6 The smoky haze blocked our view of the Appalachian Mountains. | caused by wildfires burning a thousand miles away

The smoky haze—caused by wildfires burning a thousand miles away—blocked our view of the Appalachian Mountains.

7 In 1928, Elinor Smith flew a plane under four bridges spanning New York's East River. | an astonishingly daring feat

In 1928, Elinor Smith flew a plane under four bridges spanning New York's East River—an astonishingly daring feat.

8 Arizona's monsoon season provides much-needed water to the desert. | which runs from June through September

Arizona's monsoon season, which runs from June through September, provides much-needed water to the desert.