

COMMA TIP 7

Before you add a comma, know the difference between *so* and *so that*.

So – COORDINATING CONJUNCTION

So, a **coordinating conjunction**, can join two **main clauses**. The pattern looks like this:

MAIN CLAUSE + , + **so** + **MAIN CLAUSE** .

Katherine recently adopted a Great Dane puppy, *so* she spends considerable time wiping up puddles of dog urine with a sponge.

Mike agreed to help Helen move to her new apartment, *so* he spent Saturday lifting heavy furniture and struggling with unwieldy boxes.

Johnny drives a rusty sedan with no air conditioning, *so* he must use the strongest antiperspirant on the market.

So that – SUBORDINATE CONJUNCTION

So that, on the other hand, is a **subordinate conjunction** that introduces a **subordinate clause**. The pattern looks like this:

MAIN CLAUSE + Ø + *so that* + **SUBORDINATE CLAUSE** .

The new puppy whines pathetically *so that* Katherine will let it sleep on the bed.

Mike soaked in a hot bath *so that* his stiff back would relax.

During the summer, Johnny drives with a big cup of ice *so that* he doesn't overheat and pass out in the hot car.

THE REASON FOR THE CONFUSION

So that can confuse writers because the **that** is optional. When the **that** is missing, don't mistake **so that** for **so**, thus adding incorrect punctuation.

Angie peeled away the crispy chicken skin **so** [or **so that**] she could later eat a brownie without concerns about the calories.

Before beginning his daydream, Frank opened his literature book **so** [or **so that**] he appeared to be paying attention to the discussion.

Unconcerned about small children or kittens, Carlotta recklessly sped through the residential neighborhood **so** [or **so that**] she would be home in time to watch a rerun of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, her favorite TV show.

QUICK TEST

Directions: Add commas where they are necessary.

1. Robbie bought a small microwave for his first apartment so he could cook popcorn and macaroni and cheese, the only meals he could afford.
2. Sylvia wore flat shoes on her date with Tony so she wouldn't intimidate this short young man with her height.
3. Yuko bought a small aquarium and some goldfish so her apartment wouldn't feel so lonely.
4. Patrick always carries an English handbook with him, even to basketball games so that he can check other people's grammar wherever he goes.
5. Rachel neglected to make her car payment three months in a row so she must hide her car in friends' garages in an attempt to foil the repo man.

