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Commas That Change Meaning

Medium | B1 | Intermediate | Clause | Comma | Complex sentence | Imperative mood | Object | Punctuation | Relative clause

1. Help the detective write her warning accurately! She wants to text her team that *only* the suspects wearing red hats are dangerous (the suspects in blue hats are totally harmless).

Choose the sentence that expresses this exact meaning.

Select one.

- **A)** The suspects who are wearing red hats are highly dangerous.
- **B)** The suspects, who are wearing red hats, are highly dangerous.
- **C)** The suspects who are wearing red hats, are highly dangerous.
- **D)** The suspects, who are wearing red hats are highly dangerous.

2. Chef Marcel is texting his kitchen assistants to get the dinner service started, but his lack of punctuation is causing alarm! He wants to speak *to* his team, not talk about serving them for dinner.

Which of the following sentences correctly use a comma to show direct address? Select ALL the sentences that apply.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** It's time to eat, everyone!
- **B)** Let's start serving, guys!
- **C)** Let's cook Mom!
- **D)** I'm ready to roast David!

3. Help the detective complete her case notes by dragging the correct meaning to match each witness statement. Pay close attention to the commas!

Witness A stated: "The suspects who wore red hats fled the scene."
According to grammar rules, this means that _____ wore red hats and ran away.

Witness B stated: "The suspects, who wore red hats, fled the scene."
According to grammar rules, this means that _____ wore red hats and ran away.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** only some of the suspects
- **B)** all of the suspects
- **C)** none of the suspects

Blank 2

- **A)** only some of the suspects
- **B)** all of the suspects
- **C)** none of the suspects

4. A real estate agent is writing an email to her boss about a recent client tour. She writes:

"My clients loved the house, which has a swimming pool."

Based on her use of the comma before "which," what is she communicating to her boss? Select ALL the statements that apply.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** The clients only looked at one specific house during the tour.
- **B)** The fact that the house has a swimming pool is just an extra, bonus detail.
- **C)** The clients visited several houses, but they specifically chose the one with the pool.
- **D)** The phrase "which has a swimming pool" is absolutely necessary to identify which house they loved.

5. Help the Area 51 security guard write his incident report! He needs to convey two very specific facts:
1. Only a *specific group* of aliens was captured (the ones doing a silly dance; the others got away!).
2. *All* the scientists were terrified (and as an extra, non-essential detail, they were all hiding).

Select the correct option for each blank to make the meaning crystal clear.

The aliens _____ were captured by the security team. Meanwhile, the scientists _____ watched in absolute terror.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1
- **A)** who were dancing the Macarena
- **B)** , who were dancing the Macarena,

Blank 2
- **A)** who were hiding under their desks
- **B)** , who were hiding under their desks,

6. Help Detective Miller interpret this crucial clue! The witness wrote the following sentence in their official report:

"The suspects who were wearing red hats escaped."

Notice that there are **no commas** around the phrase "who were wearing red hats." Based on this exact punctuation, what is the witness communicating? Select ALL the statements that apply.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** There were multiple suspects at the scene, but only a smaller group of them escaped.
- **B)** The phrase "who were wearing red hats" is essential information needed to identify exactly who ran away.
- **C)** Every single suspect at the scene was wearing a red hat and escaped.
- **D)** The detail about the red hats is just extra, non-essential information that could be removed without changing the core meaning.

7. Complete the friends' text messages. Maya has **three** sisters and is talking about a specific one. Leo has **only one** brother.

Select the correct option for each blank so their sentences match their family trees!

Maya: I'm visiting my sister _____ next week. The other two are so jealous!

Leo: Have fun! My brother _____ is coming to stay with me, so I'll be eating broccoli all week.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1
- **A)** who owns a bakery
- **B)** , who owns a bakery,

Blank 2
- **A)** who hates sweets
- **B)** , who hates sweets,

8. Complete the eccentric scientist's journal by dragging the correct interpretation to match his notes about his test subjects.

Note 1: "The zombies who ate their vegetables are allowed inside the bunker."
Interpretation: This means that _____ can come in.

Note 2: "The zombies, who ate their vegetables, are allowed inside the bunker."
Interpretation: This means that _____ can come in.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1
- **A)** only the healthy zombies
- **B)** every single zombie
- **C)** the human survivors

Blank 2
- **A)** only the healthy zombies
- **B)** every single zombie
- **C)** the human survivors

9. Read the comedian's joke setup and choose the correct interpretation based on the punctuation.

"My brother, who lives in Paris, is terrified of baguettes."

Based on the commas in this sentence, what do we know about the comedian's family?

Select one.

- **A)** The comedian has exactly one brother.
- **B)** The comedian has more than one brother.
- **C)** The comedian's brother is the only person who lives in Paris.
- **D)** The comedian has no brothers.

10. Help the HR manager understand the company newsletter. Read the sentence below and choose the statement that correctly describes its meaning.

"The developers, who fixed the server crash, were given an extra week of vacation."

Select one.

- **A)** All the developers fixed the server crash and got extra vacation.
- **B)** Only the specific developers who fixed the crash got extra vacation, while the rest got nothing.
- **C)** The developers fixed the server crash because they wanted extra vacation.
- **D)** The company has no developers left after the server crash.