

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 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.

