

Commas in Lists

Look at this sentence:

The fruit bowl has oranges and bananas and pears and kiwis and apples in it.



What is wrong with using 'and' between each item in the list?

Taking out 'and'

Let's take our fruit bowl sentence and remove 'and'. Has this improved it?

The fruit bowl has oranges ~~and bananas~~ ~~and pears~~ ~~and kiwis~~ ~~and apples~~ in it.



The fruit bowl has oranges bananas pears kiwis apples in it.

We do need one 'and' in the sentence. Where should it go?

Using one 'and'

We need to put an 'and' between the last two items in our list:

The fruit bowl has oranges bananas pears kiwis apples in it.



The fruit bowl has oranges bananas pears kiwis and apples in it.

Using Commas

We have now improved our sentence by only using one 'and'. Now we need to separate the other items in our list to avoid confusion. This is where commas come in handy!

The fruit bowl has oranges, bananas, pears, kiwis and apples in it.

A comma is put between each item in the list, but the last two items always have 'and' between them and no comma.

Things to Avoid

- Don't put a comma before the first item in your list:

The party was, fun, loud and exciting.



- Don't put a comma in a list of just two items:

For tea we are having tea, and toast.

