For more information on commas and coordinating conjunctions, see Mini-Lesson #8, "Coordinating Two Sentences" and *The Everyday Writer*, 3rd Edition, Section 22a (pages 187-188).
Commas alone cannot join two complete sentences. However, a comma with one of the following coordinating conjunctions can combine two complete sentences:

- and
- but
- or
- for (meaning “because”)
- so
- yet (meaning “but”)
- nor

These coordinating conjunctions can be used to join ideas of equal weight or importance:

My dog is old. My cat is still a kitten.

My dog is old, but my cat is still a kitten.

Use these examples as a guide for using commas to combine two sentences:

Ann Landers is an advice columnist, and her sister writes an advice column too.

Mike looked for the way out of the cave, but he couldn’t remember which tunnel led outside.

Are you coming to the movies with us, or are you going to the mall with them?

The actors were all more nervous than usual before a play, for they had heard that the President and First Lady were in the audience.

Jeanette felt she had very poor public speaking skills, so she signed up for a non-credit speech course in order to practice.

I couldn’t get into the class, yet I needed it to graduate.

The first taxicab did not stop for us, nor did any of the other four that passed us in the next hour.

Useful vocabulary:

**Independent Clause** is another way to refer to a complete sentence. An independent clause must include a subject, a verb, and a complete thought.

**Comma splice** refers to two sentences joined only with the comma without the coordinating conjunction that should follow.

**Run-on** refers to two sentences joined only with a coordinating conjunction without the comma preceding it.

**Fused sentence** refers to two sentences joined with no comma and no coordinating conjunction.