Mastery Series: Punctuation Exercises

Quick Sentence Diagnostic:
Are the following solid sentences or rule-breakers?
*Sentences borrowed from Warriner’s.

1. *When you drive a car you must carry liability insurance, which pays for any damage or injury that you may inflict on others.
2. *Insurance in some places is cheaper, than it is in others.
3. *How much insurance costs depends on how congested traffic is in the area.
4. *If you live in a rural community, you probably pay much less than you would, if you lived in a city.
5. *An unmarried male who is under twenty-five pays the highest premium, because statistics show that he is the worst risk.
6. *Drivers who have a record of accidents must also pay a high premium; since they have cost their insurance companies a great deal of money.
7. If you are properly insured it is a very good idea to drive to and around Lake Tahoe.
8. I particularly recommend the East shore of Lake Tahoe but if you are going during Winter then you might prefer Kirkwood and the West shore.

Quick Check:
I walk to the beach because the sun shines.
I walk to the beach; because the sun shines.
Jesus’ followers wrote about their experiences.

1. True or False? Every long sentence can be termed a run-on sentence.
2. True or False? Writers should take mental guillotines to every long sentence.
3. Correct or Incorrect? I love the rain; I also really appreciate the sunshine.

Coordinating Conjunction (FANBOY) commas (Solid or RB?)

1. Needing a break from writing, I walk to the store and buy coffee.
2. I run to the store and they are totally sold out of coffee.
3. I am forced, instead, to buy wine, and I also purchase a newspaper.
4. Luckily, I enjoy wine and also enjoy reading. A friend of mine once said that much of writing is thinking. That’s great but I have a deadline.

Introductory (INTRO.) commas (Solid or RB?)

1. Conversely I wondered if a break wasn’t actually good for writing.
2. Later in the day, I realized that I could plan breaks.
3. I also realize that making coaching appointments could serve as deadlines.
4. When I realize all of that and start making appointments I suddenly feel better about this whole writing thing.

Oxford commas (remember, consistency; whether you choose to use them or no) (Solid or RB?)

1. After working with the writing coaches, it was suddenly much easier to write, to read and to spot typos on twitter.
2. At the store, George bought scotch, oranges, and two steaks.
3. The coaches welcome students to work with one of us, two of us, every single one of us or anything in between. Whatever works for you makes us happy.
4. Sometimes, I have a harder time than you would think coming up with new comma exercise examples, whether on the FANBOY commas, the INTRO. commas, or the Oxford commas. Examples of the 10th comma rule always come easily, though.

**Non-essential element (NE) commas (Solid or RB?)**

1. Jane, who has just started studying at NPS likes the coast.
2. The fact that a majority of UN countries including the United States and China agreed helped the peace process.
3. We all wondered, however, how long peace would last.
4. Fortunately, in 2022 a group of children came together and decided they also wanted peace. Amazingly, with the help of their parents, they really helped change things.

**Commas, mixed (Solid or RB?)**

1. The soldier was happy to see his parents, his teacher, and his mentor.
2. The soldier was happy to see his parents, his teacher and his mentor.
3. Toward the end of the conflict economic growth had become stagnant.
4. Since its inception, the Department of Homeland Security has faced funding challenges.
5. Food that is gray makes me nervous.
6. Gray foods, which are completely unnatural, make me nervous.

**Semi-colons (Solid or RB?)**

1. Most people prefer Coke over Pepsi; even the PepsiCo offices have Coke machines hidden away.
2. She handed him the summons; he was crushed.
3. He was crushed; when she handed him the summons.
4. Chapter VI presents my conclusion; and areas for future research.
5. NPS has students from all over the world, including Istanbul, Turkey; Manama, Bahrain; and Toronto, Canada.

**Apostrophes (Solid or RB?)**

1. He could not stop eating pancake’s.
2. A puppy’s love is forever. So, too, is its incredible ability to shed.
3. The CIA’s policy is to exclude all weapons from the building.
4. Have you learned your ABCs?
5. The girls from Queens flaunted their ’80s hairstyles.
6. Jesus’ followers went on to live.

**Test drive your punctuation knowledge (can you find 15 punctuation errors?)**

“I can see by my watch without taking my hand from the left grip of the cycle, that it is eight-thirty in the morning the wind, even at sixty miles an hour is warm and humid. When its this hot and muggy at eight-thirty, Im wondering what it's going to be like in the afternoon.

In the wind [there] are pungent odors from the marshes by the road. We are in an area of the Central Plains filled, with thousands of duck hunting sloughs heading northwest from Minneapolis’ toward the Dakotas. This highway is an old concrete twolaner that hasn't had much traffic; since a four-laner went in parallel to it several years ago. When we pass a marsh the air suddenly becomes cooler. Then, when we are past, it suddenly warms up again. - Robert M Pirsig