

# personal english



## Grammar Tidbit #16

# The Oxford Comma Debate

Let's eat grandpa.

Let's eat, grandpa.

**correct punctuation can  
save a person`s life.**

The Oxford comma is **the final comma in a list of things**; for example:

*Please bring me a pencil, eraser  and notebook.*

AP Style – the style guide that newspaper reporters adhere to – does not require the use of the Oxford comma, as this comma is a **matter of style**, rather than of correctness. This means that, unless you're writing for a particular publication or drafting an essay for school, whether or not using the Oxford comma is up to you. However, **its use is strongly encouraged whenever its omission may cause misunderstandings**, as in the 'Let's eat granpa' example on the left.

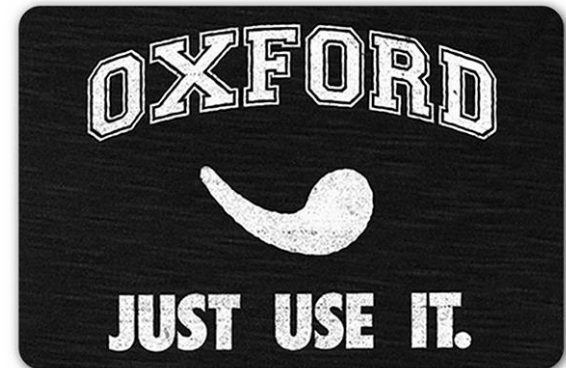
Here follows a further example:

*I love my parents, Lady Gaga and Humpty Dumpty.*

Without the Oxford comma, the sentence above could be interpreted as stating that you love your parents, and that your parents ARE Lady Gaga and Humpty Dumpty. Those who oppose the Oxford comma argue that **rephrasing can solve the same problems as using the Oxford comma does**. For example, the sentence above could be rewritten as:

*I love Lady Gaga, Humpty Dumpty and my parents.*

In short: the main purpose of the Oxford comma is to avoid misunderstandings. **Whenever you have the impression your sentence may be misinterpreted, go either for the Oxford comma or for rephrasing.**



Click on the Pictures for Two  
**VIDEOS**  
on the Oxford Comma