

## MISSING COMMA WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT: THE VIDEO

A credit sequence appears on silent-movie title cards.

Missing Comma with an Introductory Element: The Video

Or, How I Learned When Commas Make a Big Difference (And When They Don't)

Starring

[A small wooden figure bows]

As "The Writer"

And

[A small wooden fish wiggles its tail]

As "Rover"

The writer is typing these words:

Although not a car was in sight the tourists did not cross the street until the light turned green.

The writer ponders. Title cards appear:

Hmmm. Does it need a comma?

"Although not a car was in sight" introduces the main part of the sentence, doesn't it?

Let me try a comma to see how it looks.

The typed words appear again. A comma appears after "Although not a car was in sight," then disappears and reappears:

Although not a car was in sight the tourists did not cross the street until the light turned green.

Although not a car was in sight, the tourists did not cross the street until the light turned green.

The writer ponders. Title cards appear:

With the comma, it's a little easier to understand the sentence.

Right, Rover?

The fish waves its tail. A title card appears:

Woof

The writer raises the fish triumphantly. A title card appears:

I think so, too!

The typed words appear again, with the comma in place.

Although not a car was in sight, the tourists did not cross the street until the light turned green.

The writer types again. A new sentence appears:

Soon they decided to jaywalk along with the locals.

The writer and Rover ponder together. Title cards appear:

Hmmm. "Soon" seems like an introductory word.

Does it need a comma?

The sentence appears, then a comma pops in and out after "Soon."

Soon they decided to jaywalk along with the locals.

Soon, they decided to jaywalk along with the locals.

The writer scratches his head. Title cards appear.

The comma changes the sentence a little.

But both versions seem OK.

The comma DOES put more emphasis on "soon."

The typed sentence appears with a comma in place.

Soon, they decided to jaywalk along with the locals.

Title cards appear as the writer thinks about the comma.

Do I want to emphasize "soon"?

Then I should include the comma.

Right, Rover?

The fish waves its tail. Title cards appear along with a barking sound:

A comma is sometimes optional with introductory elements.

However, including the comma will never be wrong.

The writer raises his arms and says, "Good dog!"

The writer and Rover dance happily. A title card says, "The End."