

# The Writing Center @ KUMC

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## Not Only But Also

“Not only” and “but also” normally go immediately before the words or expressions modified by them:

- The place was *not only* good *but also* safe.
- He is not only a good husband but also a good father.
- She speaks not only English but also French and Italian and German.

Mid position with verb is also possible:

- She not only speaks English but also French...

For emphasis “not only” can be moved to the beginning of a clause. Note that we use the inverted word order “not only + auxiliary verb + subject.” “But” can be left out in some cases:

- She was not only sad but also angry.
- Not only was she sad, she was also angry.
- They not only need food but also shelter.
- Not only do they need food, they also need shelter.

Typically, you do not need a comma between **not only** and **but also** because they are a correlative pair. They are used as a set. There is no rule requiring a comma, but putting one between this pair is usually unnecessary. You use the comma only if *not only...but also* is linking two lengthy clauses rather than two relatively brief sentence parts. Length or grammar is a definite consideration for a comma when understanding might be difficult:

- Not only those people who never seem to be able to make up their minds which way to vote until the very last minute, but also those who in the recent past have remained faithful to their traditional parties, are deciding that this election is one where they must examine the party platforms very closely.
- He was sure not only that the container was full, which was expected at the end of the day, but also that he was too tired to empty it.

Also, note how when **not only** begins the sentence followed by a pronoun like “she” or “they,” a comma appears before **but also** for the sake of parallel structure.