SO VS. SO THAT

“So” acts as a coordinating conjunction and indicates a response or counter action. “So that” introduces a subordinate clause. It shows an action producing an intended result or a cause producing an effect.

HOW TO USE “SO” AND “SO THAT”

1. **Separate two complete sentences with a comma and “so”** – The first sentence conveys action, so the second sentence expresses a response/counter action.

2. **Separate two complete sentences with “so that”** – The first sentence communicates an action/cause so that the second sentence can address the result/effect.

3. **Introduce a subject-verb clause with “so that” and a comma** – The first subject-verb clause states the intended result/effect, and the second reveals the action/cause.

EXAMPLES

**Separate two complete sentences with a comma and “so.”**

- Jake bought the marshmallows (action), **so** Tina bought the chocolate and graham crackers (response).
  - “So” indicates Tina’s response to Jake’s action.

**Separate two complete sentences with “so that.”**

- Pavlov rang the bell (action) **so that** the dog would salivate (intended result).
  - “So that” emphasizes that ringing the bell causes the dog to salivate.

**Introduce a subject-verb clause with “so that” and a comma.**

- **So that** she would not be late for class (intended result), Elizabeth set her alarm (action).
  - “So that” indicates the intended result of Elizabeth setting her alarm.

We often shorten phrases in American English, using “so” when we mean “so that.” Punctuate your sentences to indicate whether you are using “so” as a conjunction or as a shortened form of “so that.”