

CONQUERING



COMMAS

Why are commas used? Why is it important to use them correctly?

Commas are used to separate parts of a sentence. They may serve to separate items in a list, set apart introductory words or phrases, indicate groups of words that go together, or separate a quotation from the rest of the sentence, along with many other purposes. Using commas incorrectly can make the sentence confusing for the reader and may give the impression of carelessness in your writing. Below are a few guidelines for deciding if a comma is needed.

Commas for Lists

Use commas to separate three or more items in a list, or two or more adjectives (description words) that describe the same object. You will know that the comma is being used correctly if it could be replaced with the words "and" or "or."

- Ex: Starbursts come in strawberry, cherry, orange, and lemon flavors.
- Ex2: Her hair was long, blonde, and curly.

Compound Sentences

Use commas to join two complete sentences (called a compound sentence) together WITH a conjunction (connecting word). Conjunctions are the words for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so (Remember the acronym FANBOYS).

- Ex: Yesterday was Brad's brother's birthday, so he took him out to dinner.
- Ex2: Actor Heath Ledger completed his role as the Joker in the movie *The Dark Knight*, but he passed away before the film was released.

After Introductory Words or Phrases

Setting off introductory words or phrases lets the reader know that the main subject and verb (action word) of the sentence are coming.

- Ex: No, you may not go outside while it is storming.
- Ex2: If it is raining tomorrow, we will have to reschedule the soccer game.
- Ex3: If you suffer from motion sickness, try taking Dramamine to help prevent nausea.

Use a pair of commas in the middle of a sentence to set off words or

Non-essential or Interruptive Words or Phrases

phrases that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. These words or phrases interrupt the main thought by adding additional information. If you took these words out, the sentence would still make sense grammatically. Put a comma both before and after the word or phrase.

- Ex: Hurricane Ian, which hit Florida in September of 2022, caused over \$113 billion in damage and killed 152 people.
- Ex2: Warner University, located in Central Florida, is less than an hour from Disney World.

Setting Off Quotations

Use a comma to separate quotations or dialogue (speech between two or more characters) from the rest of sentence.

- Ex: "Our next test will be about the Civil War," Mrs. Johnson told the class.
- Ex2: In the book of John, Jesus states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Address, Dates, and Names

In addresses, use a comma to separate the city and state.

- Ex: Lake Wales, Florida

For dates, use commas to separate the day from the year.

- September 11, 2001

Use a comma to separate a person's name from their title.

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- John Adams, Ph.D.

Avoid: Comma Splices

A comma splice is when two complete sentences are joined together WITHOUT using a conjunction (connecting word - see above).

- Ex: I went to the cafeteria for lunch, I ate pizza and a salad.

Ways to fix:

- Add a conjunction: I went to the cafeteria for lunch and ate pizza and a salad.
- Replace the comma with a period: I went to the cafeteria for lunch. I ate pizza and a salad.
- Replace the comma with a semicolon: I went to the cafeteria for lunch; I ate pizza and a salad.