



Commas

What is a comma?

A comma is a mark of punctuation used so the reader can best understand the text that is written. Commas show division within the sentence and add clarity.

What are commas used for?

Commas are used for many things. They are often used for lists, placed in between various adjectives, or used with *independent clauses*. More often than not, they are misused in the form of under use or overuse. The best way to avoid these two common mistakes is to form a better understanding of commas and all their functions.

An *independent clause* is a phrase that can stand alone as a complete sentence. It has both a subject and a verb and forms a complete thought.

Commas are used in a variety of ways:

In a Series

When listing three or more things, commas are needed to separate them.

Red, white, and blue

I went to the store to buy eggs, bread, and bacon.

Between Adjectives

When using two or more descriptive words to describe one thing, commas should separate them.

She wore thick, soft, fuzzy layers to keep her warm in the harsh, unforgiving air.

He is a hardworking, dependable, coworker with a solid work ethic.

After Introductory Elements

A comma belongs after an introductory word, transitional phrase, or clause.

I agree he should get out more and have fun. However, I don't believe that should distract him from his studies.

In fact, there are more assignments to do than I thought.

Compound Sentences

If there are two independent clauses combined with a *conjunction* in your writing, then you need a comma before the conjunction.

I told him not to buy the toy, but he did anyway.

I wanted to meet Emily for dinner, but I already had plans with Joan.

Conjunctions are words used as connectors between phrases, clauses or sentences.

Conjunction words:
for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so



Interrupter Phrases

Phrases that can be taken out of the sentence and the sentence still make sense are interrupter phrases and need to be offset by commas.

Julia, my younger sister, wants to be a doctor.

Oklahoma, the state that had the very first tornado forecast, has many tornados each year.

Everyday Material

Commas in everyday material separate items.

In addresses, commas separate the street address as well as the city and state.

My parents live at 1675 North Buena Vista Drive, Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

In dates, commas separate the month from the year.

Her wedding is June 22, 2017.

Offsetting Dialogue

Commas offset who said the dialogue.

"It's going to rain today," the girl said.

Mr. Adams questioned, "Did anyone do their homework last night?"

"Kevin, please get down from there," his mother said.



Make sure to avoid comma splices.

Comma splices are two independent clauses with a comma separating them.

We wanted ice cream, it was a hot day.

Correct this by adding a period or adding a comma and a conjunction word.

We wanted ice cream. It was a hot day.

It was a hot day, so we wanted ice cream.