



Writing with Commas

WHAT IS A COMMA?

a punctuation mark (,) indicating a pause between parts of a sentence.

RULES FOR USING COMMAS

1. USE A COMMA BEFORE A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION JOINING INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

a. When a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) connects two or more independent clauses (word groups that can stand alone as sentences) a comma must come before the conjunction.

i. Example: My car broke down, **so** I was thirty minutes late for class.

2. USE A COMMA AFTER AN INTRODUCTORY CLAUSE OR PHRASE

a. A comma tells readers that the introductory clause or phrase (sets the scene of the sentence by telling readers when, where, how, why, or under what conditions) has come to an end and that the main part of the sentence is about to begin.

i. Example: **When I walked in**, I rushed to my seat.

3. USE A COMMA BETWEEN ALL ITEMS IN A SERIES

a. When three or more items are presented in a series, separate the items from each other with commas.

i. Example: I hastily pulled my **textbook, notebook, and pencil** out of my backpack.

4. USE A COMMA BETWEEN COORDINATE ADJECTIVES

a. Coordinate adjectives are adjectives that both modify the same noun separately. If the adjectives can be joined with and or switch positions, they are coordinate. Coordinate adjectives should be separated with commas.

i. Example: We read an **engaging, lengthy** article on writing skills.

5. USE A COMMA TO SET OFF NONRESTRICTIVE ELEMENTS

a. Nonrestrictive, also called nonessential, elements modify nouns or pronouns. They are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. If they are removed from the sentence, it still makes sense.

i. Example: We discussed the article and completed an activity, **which took longer than I thought**.

6. USE COMMAS TO SET OFF TRANSITIONAL AND PARENTHETICAL EXPRESSIONS

a. Transitional expressions act as a connection between sentences or parts of sentences. They include words like *however*, *therefore*, and *moreover*.

i. Example: The activity had us analyze the article and locate its parts; **however**, I couldn't find the thesis statement, but I found everything else..

7. USE COMMAS WITH DATES, ADDRESSES, TITLES, AND NUMBERS

i. Dates: The article was published on **December 10th, 1992**.

ii. Addresses: The original publication location was **1230 6th Ave, New York, NY 10020**.

iii. Titles: It was written by Hazel Hargrave, **Phd**.

iv. Numbers: Dr. Hargrave was part of a collection that was over **1,000** pages.

8. USE COMMAS WITH EXPRESSIONS SUCH AS HE SAID TO SET OF DIRECT QUOTES

i. Quotes: Dr. Hargrave gave an interview about his article. **He said**, "Writing skills are important no matter what profession you go into. I hope this articles helps students see the value in these skills."