

COMMAS:

When and How to Use Them



Use a comma to separate **two independent clauses** when they are joined by one of seven **coordinating conjunctions** (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*)

We were out of ice cream, **so** I went to the store.

Use commas around **(a)** participial phrases, **(b)** appositives, and **(c)** adjective clauses

(a) Joey, **moving quickly**, left his house and headed to the train station.
(b) My English teacher, **Ms. Jones**, taught the class about commas.
(c) Sarah had cereal, **which she thinks tastes better**, instead of oatmeal.

Use a comma after an **introductory** phrase, clause, or word

Right before class, I decided to get a snack.
Yes, you may come in.

Use a comma to **separate a series** of three or more items

His best friends were **Nick, Michael, and Sam**.

Use a comma when introducing a quotation

J.D. Salinger **said**, "My name is J.D. Salinger. I wrote books."

Use a comma in between **contrasting** elements

Her favorite color was **blue, not red**.

Use a comma to indicate a **pause** to the reader

His tone seemed upset, **almost bitter**, over the phone.

COMMON COMMA MISTAKES



Try to avoid **oversaturating** your text with commas

Too many commas in a sentence may make your writing clunky and difficult for the reader to follow.

DO NOT separate the subject from the verb with a comma

Example of what NOT to do:

The scary dog, barked all night long.

DO NOT use a comma to separate
(a) compound subjects or
(b) compound verbs

Examples of what NOT to do:

(a): She, and her friend went to the grocery store.

(b): Joey and Michael went to the party, and danced to music.

AVOID “comma splices”:

In order to separate **two independent clauses**, you should not use a comma **UNLESS** you also use a **coordinating conjunction**.

Example of what NOT to do:

Emma wanted to meet new people, she tried to join more clubs.

Corrected example:

Emma wanted to meet new people, **so** she tried to join more clubs.