

# COMMAS

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**Use a comma to separate items in a series.**

Please bring your laptop, notes, and textbook to class.

**Use a comma before a conjunction that separates two complete, independent ideas. Observe the FAN BOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.**

I was supposed to do a presentation today, but we ran out of time.

BUT: We were going to discuss that chapter today but didn't have time.

**Use a comma after a dependent, introductory idea (word, phrase, or clause). Notice that these introductory phrases often describe time or place.**

As he walked into the ballroom, everyone turned to stare.

Before long, he started to wonder why people were pointing at him.

He'd been in such a rush, he'd forgotten to put on pants.

**Use a comma to set off parenthetical or nonessential expressions, those words in a sentence without which the sentence would still have the same meaning.**

I went to the ATM, since I didn't have cash, and found I was overdrawn.

**Take heed of "who" or "which" ideas and decide whether the information is essential to the sentence or not:**

Chris, who aced the first test, was surprisingly worried about the final.

BUT: The student who aced the first test was the most worried about her grade.

**Use a comma to separate date from year and city from state; also use a comma after the city and state if the sentence continues on.**

My mother was born in Deadwood, South Dakota, on October 31, 1946.

**Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives when "and" could be used between them, or when the adjectives could be switched and retain sense.**

It was a hot, dry summer day.  $\leftrightarrow$  It was a dry, hot summer day.

BUT: She wore a short blue dress.

**Use a comma with a direct address or after salutations; also use a comma before titles and degrees following a name.**

Hi, Mom! Bye, Mr. Miller, and take care!

Well, that's a tricky question.

The graduation speaker was John Parker, Ph.D.

**Enclose in commas any *appositives*, words or phrases which rename another word or phrase, or any repeated phrases, or before "too."**

Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer, had a very shiny nose.

It was glowing, really glowing!

Santa was surprised, too.

**Do NOT place a comma between subject and verb.**

The boys living on the fourth floor of Halls [no comma] came stumbling in late last night.

**Do NOT place a comma between a verb and its direct object, nor between a direct object and an indirect object.**

Don't forget to give me [no comma] your grammar exercises before you leave.