

# COMPACT COMMA SUMMARY

Do not use a comma unless you have a reason.

## 1. Use commas between items in a SERIES.

- A. Words
- B. Phrases
- C. Clauses

## SERIES

- A. Bring your notebook, pen, and textbook to class every day.
- B. You can remove the cover, adjust the drive belt, and replace the cover with just one tool.
- C. We cannot decide what information we will store, how we will retrieve it, or how it will be used.

## 2. Use commas in COORDINATE situations.

- A. Compound sentences with conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet)
- B. Compound sentences after a semicolon and conjunctive adverb (therefore, however, thus, . . .)
- C. Adjectives (only if they are reversible)

## COORDINATE

- A. You must set the dial, and the ready light must be visible.
- B. The storm pounded against the shutters; however, no windows were broken.
- C. It is an efficient, inexpensive unit.

## 3. Use commas after INTRODUCTORY elements in sentences.

- A. Nouns of address
- B. Mild interjections (oh, well, my, . . .)
- C. Group of prepositional phrases (in, on, over, under, through, of, . . .)
- D. Participial words or phrases
- E. Infinitive phrases
- F. Subordinate clauses (when, if, after, since, because, . . .)
- G. Absolutes
- H. Transition words or phrases (in summary, in conclusion, . . .)

## INTRODUCTORY

- A. Thomas, the door is still open.
- B. Well, I didn't like the conference.
- C. In a rush of anger without a second thought, he destroyed the experiment.
- D. Referring to the chart, you will note the clear results of the research.
- E. To install the storm door, remove the packing material and the trim.
- F. After he retyped the memo, Carl sent it to his boss.
- G. Headlights piercing the fog, the ambulance continued its course.
- H. First of all, I want to explain the controls.

## 4. Use commas to set off INTERRUPTING elements.

- A. Nouns of address
- B. Appositives
- C. Contrasting elements
- D. Describing (but not necessary) phrases
- E. Describing (but not necessary) clauses
- F. Absolutes
- G. Parenthetical expressions

## INTERRUPTING

- A. In some cases, Mr. Jones, this rule helps.  
Close the window, Emma.
- B. The printer, a tractor mechanism, uses a simple control.  
He bought a new car, a compact station wagon.
- C. The software, not the hardware, is the problem in this case.  
We remember our joys, not our sorrows.
- D. The printed text, displayed with or without the coding, is usable for editing.  
We enjoyed the new van, painted with a bright mural.
- E. The line numbers, which apply in most cases, have little value in this situation.  
We can't go to Tom's party, which will be held in a rented gym.
- F. Matty McDougal, her fist clenching in anger, wanted only to be left alone.  
Mark jumped at the sound of his alarm, its music blaring.
- G. The program, admittedly, is weak in some areas.  
He will finish the project, no doubt.  
The accounts will be prorated; i.e., they will be adjusted.  
We will ship all items (e.g., belts, slacks, and sweaters).

## 5. Use commas in STANDARD places.

- A. Between and after parts of addresses in a sentence (not with ZIP Codes)
- B. Between and after parts of dates in a sentence
- C. To set off the direct words of a speaker
- D. In a business letter after the close
- E. In a personal letter after the opening and the close
- F. Between and after titles in a sentence
- G. In an alphabetic listing of names
- H. To change a statement into a question
- I. In numbers

## STANDARD

- A. San Francisco, California  
1000 Central Street, Dayton, Ohio  
He was born in Phoenix, Arizona, after the war.
- B. January 15, 1988      Monday, June 19, 1971  
He won the race May 17, 1903, after many years of training.
- C. Tom said, "That is not true."  
"It is possible," Tom said, "to complete the job in an hour."
- D. Sincerely,
- E. Dear Matthew,      Your friend,
- F. William Phold, Jr., is the only son of William Phold, Ph.D.
- G. Graves, Debbie  
Roberts, Josh  
Shaker, James
- H. Teresa is the boss here, isn't she?
- I. 1,256      421,226,500