



Commas

Five rules for knowing when to use them

1. The Coordinating Conjunction Comma (FANBOYS)

- Place a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two independent clauses. The coordinating conjunctions are: **and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet.**
 - My favorite place to visit is New York City, but my mother prefers to go to the beach in Florida.
 - We have to go to Florida, or my mother will be disappointed.

2. The List Comma

- Sometimes called a “serial” comma
- Use commas between three or more items in a series or list
 - I carry my phone, my laptop, a notebook, and my headphones everywhere I go.
 - We sung, danced, and laughed all night.
- BUT if you only have two items in a list, don't use a comma between them.
 - I carried my yellow notebook and three highlighters.
 - We cooked pancakes and sliced strawberries.

3. The Introductory Word, Phrase, or Dependent Clause Comma

- Introductory elements are followed by a comma.
- It could be a single word or a phrase:
 - Nonetheless, I disagree with the author.
 - For example, you could become more organized by using a calendar.
 - Before leaving, I washed the dishes.

3. The Introductory Word, Phrase, or Dependent Clause Comma (2)

- Sometimes an introductory item is a dependent clause. A dependent clause has a subject and verb (just like a sentence!), but it can't stand by itself. Keep an eye out for key words that mark dependent clauses:
 - Because
 - Since
 - When
 - While
 - Until
 - If
 - As
 - Though
 - Although
 - Unless
 - After
 - Before
 - Once
 - Whether
- While I walked to the train, I listened to Prince.
- Although I was only five when it happened, I still remember the first time I went to Coney Island.

4. The Interrupting Comma Pairs

- Put commas on both sides of an inserted phrase.
 - The answer, however, was not in the book.
 - My best friend, a boy who had lived across the street, moved to Chicago.
 - Kangaroos, for example, have actually become a nuisance.
 - My dad, who sings in the shower, is a little embarrassing.
- **BUT...**

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- Places and dates are insertions:
 - Thomas grew up in Baltimore, Maryland.
 - My mother was born on October 23, 1973, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

5. Commas with Quotations

- A comma goes after an introductory word (*said, replied, wrote, exclaimed, etc.* before a quotation.
 - My brother said, “Stop borrowing my shirts, please.”
- If a comma is needed after a title that is in quotation marks, it goes inside the quotation marks.
 - In “Mother Tongue,” Amy Tan writes about her mother’s use of English.

Practice:

Add Commas Where Necessary

1. Allied troops landed in Normandy on June 6 1944 and began the liberation of Nazi-occupied France.
2. Mix in the chocolate chips nuts and raisins and refrigerate the dough for three hours before baking.
3. The DJ brought in all his equipment and plugged in everything hoping that the power would be restored in time.
4. When we left the game we drove for twelve hours straight in order to get home by the next day.

Practice:

Add Commas Where Necessary

5. We explored Ferry Beach and waded in the pools between sand bars.
6. James Agee a writer and Walker Evans a photographer published a book that was entitled *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* about tenant farm families during the depression.

Practice:

You make the insertion

In the sentences following, take the word or words in **blue** and insert them into the first line. Add commas where necessary. For example, look at the following:

- Robert Frost was born in San Francisco and lived there until he was ten years old.

California

The new sentence should read:

- Robert Frost was born in San Francisco, **California**, and lived there until he was ten years old.

Practice:

You make the insertion

1. Fashion photography has now become an art form.
once considered a commercial endeavor
2. Adam Smith argued in favor of a free market.
who wrote *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776
3. Electrotherapy enables athletes to increase muscle size without the use of steroids.
however
4. Edward Hopper specialized in both rural and urban settings.
the American painter