

COMMAS
Regis Writing Center

1. USE A COMMA IN A COMPOUND SENTENCE

-----, and -----

The comma **precedes** the coordinate conjunction [**and, nor, or, for, but, so, yet**].

Example: The snow fell all day today, so we can expect classes to be canceled tomorrow.

Note: Do not use a comma if you don't have two independent clauses.

Example: We can talk until the early hours and lose valuable study time.
(There is no subject in the second clause, so you do not need a comma.)

2. USE A COMMA IN A SERIES

The comma follows each item in a series and precedes the conjunction unless the last two items are a unit.

Example: Jon, Andrea, and Julie will share the lottery jackpot.

Example: Jon, Andrea and Julie will share the lottery jackpot.
(Which sentence would Jon prefer?)

3. USE A COMMA BETWEEN COORDINATE ADJECTIVES

Coordinate adjectives are ones that carry the same weight.

Example: Amy is among those competent, professional employees.

Example: Amy is among those professional, competent employees.

Note: Do not use a comma if the adjectives make more sense read in only one order.

Example: Peggy drove by in her little red Volkswagen.

4. USE A COMMA IN A DIRECT ADDRESS

Use a comma after, around, or before a name

Example: Darcy, would you please stay after class?

Example: Would you stay after class, Darcy, so we can plan your graduation?

5. USE A COMMA AFTER AN INTRODUCTORY WORD, PHRASE, OR CLAUSE

If the sentence can be read without the word, phrase, or clause and it still makes sense, use a comma.

Example: Unfortunately, I could not afford the trip to Las Vegas.

Phrases of **four words or more** should be followed by a comma.

Example: Come to think of it, Cha did have the right approach.

Use a comma after dependent clauses beginning with one of the following words: **although, when, as, because, while, though, if, since.**

Example: When I arrived at school, there were no parking places.

Note: Do not use a comma if the dependent clause comes at the end of the sentence.

Example: There were no parking places when I arrived at school.

6. USE A COMMA IN REPEATED EXPRESSIONS

For emphasis or intensity, use a comma to repeat the same words or to add a qualifier to the expression.

Example: To have been given a second chance, Rochelle was relieved, very relieved.

7. USE COMMAS IN **PAIRS** AROUND A WORD OR WORD GROUP THAT INTERRUPTS THE FLOW OF A SENTENCE

Example: Jim noted, however, that he would be late for class.

Example: Michael, who is a computer whiz, will demonstrate Microsoft Word.

8. USE A COMMA TO SET OFF A DIRECT QUOTATION

Use a comma to set off a direct quotation from introductory or identifying words such as "says," "wrote," "noted." Commas and periods are always placed **inside** quotation marks; colons and semicolons are always placed outside; question marks, exclamation points, and dashes go inside if they are part of the quote and outside if they are not.

Example: As Shakespeare says, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Example: "A rose by any other name," Shakespeare says, "would smell as sweet."

Example: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," Shakespeare says.