

The Writing Center

at
Trident Technical College

- ♥ A comma acts as a guide for the reader, indicating that the reader should pause briefly at that point in the sentence.
- ♥ Commas are generally used **to join information** into the main sentence.

Use a comma after introductory material.

- Introductory material is a group of words or a word at the beginning of the sentence that usually gives time or place information. Use a comma after the introductory material to join it to the independent clause.

Types of introductory material include:

- Dependent clauses (*When I went to the store, I forgot the list*)
- Prepositional phrases (*In the middle of the night, I heard a loud sound*)
- Transitional words (however, moreover, furthermore, in addition, besides, indeed, in fact, for instance, in particular, likewise, similarly, conversely, however, in contrast, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, otherwise, consequently, thus, therefore accordingly, hence, as a result)

Use a comma between complete thoughts connected by a coordinating conjunction.

- Use a comma between two complete thoughts (independent clauses) connected by a coordinating conjunction: and, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet (FANBOYS).
- A compound sentence has two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction and a comma.

Example: I bought a new dress, *but* it did not match my shoes, *so* I returned it to the store for a refund.
(This example has three independent clauses and two coordinating conjunctions.)

Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.

- Frequently the comma is omitted after the next-to-last item in newspapers or magazines, but you are always correct to add the last comma. In fact, the comma often prevents misreading.

Example: I will be so glad when this semester is over. I am taking biology, physics, calculus, and advanced chemistry.

Use a comma to set off parenthetical expressions.

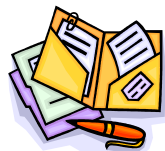
- A parenthetical expression is one that is read almost like an aside to the reader. It gives additional, extra information.

Example: I, on the other hand, failed physics and anatomy.

Use commas between coordinate adjectives.

- When adjectives modify a noun separately, they are called coordinate adjectives.
- They can be distinguished from other types of adjectives because their order can be reversed, and the word *and* can be inserted between them.

Example: I will choose a kind, compassionate woman as my new physician.



Using Commas

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Use commas around words interrupting the flow of thought.

- Use a comma at the beginning and the end of a phrase, a clause, or group of words that interrupts the flow of the thought of a sentence (words that add *extra information* to the main thought of the sentence).
- These words, phrases, or clauses are found in the middle of the sentence and are not necessary to its meaning.
- The words, phrases, or clauses could be taken out of the sentence, and the sentence would still be a complete thought.
- Interrupters and appositives are nonessential phrases or clauses often found in the middle of the sentence. Because they are not necessary to the meaning of the sentence, commas surround them.

Examples:

Mary, *who is my best friend*, moved away last week. (appositive)

The Shining, *a novel by Stephen King*, is the scariest book I have ever read. (appositive)

Use a comma to set off nouns of direct address.

- Direct address simply means that a person is called by his or her name.

Example: Please, Susan, don't forget that your best friend needs your advice sometimes.

Use a comma to set off contrasting elements.

- Generally, a contrasting element is introduced by words such as *not*, *unlike*, or *never*.

Example: I knew then that I was going to be a nurse, not a teacher.

Use a comma to set off the text that identifies the speaker from the direct quotation.

Example: "This is the hardest course I have ever had," Steve wrote to his parents.

Use a comma in dates, addresses, long numbers, and titles.

- If only the month and the year are given, no comma is necessary.

Examples:

On July 1, 1997, the center for Academic Excellence opened.

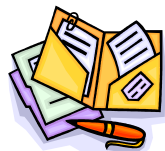
Please send this letter to Rachel Sommers at 120 Loblolly Avenue, Asheville, North Carolina.

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Gilbert Bradham, M.D., is the Dean of Students at the Medical University of Timbuktu.

Use a comma to prevent misreading when a word is omitted, repeated, or could be mistakenly grouped with the words that follow. This is normally used in creative writing, only rarely in academic writing.

(07/10)



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