

Commas

A. Use a comma to separate three or more items in a series.

Ex: *I ate bread, steak, corn, and pie.*

***Do not** place a comma between the final adjective of a series and the noun it modifies.

Ex: *Energetic, efficient, and polite salespeople are in demand.*

B. Use a comma in a series of two or more adjectives only if the word “and” can be replaced where the comma is.

Ex: *The tall, well-built athlete is nice.*

***Hint:** Listen for a natural pause in the sentence, like after “tall” in the example above.

***Remember** to include commas between dates and cities/states.

Ex: *On April 13, 1990, my son was born in Wichita, Kansas.*

C. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, so, for, yet) to connect two independent clauses.

* The clauses must each be complete sentences.

Ex: *The boy went to school, **but** he left because of an illness.*

* Commas are also used with afterthoughts.

Ex: *A mile is 5,280 feet, **or** 1,760 yards.*

D. Use a comma after clauses or phrases that come at the beginning of a sentence.

Ex: *When he goes home, he raids the refrigerator.*

* **Do not** use a comma if the clause or phrase comes at the end of the sentence unless it is an obvious afterthought.

Ex: *He raids the refrigerator when he goes home.*

E. Use a comma before a transitional word at the beginning of a sentence.

Ex: *Furthermore, she liked guys.*

***Also,** use a comma before a transitional word at the end of the sentence.

Ex: *She liked boys, too.*

***Hint:** Often a comma is essential to ensure the accuracy of your statement. If you are unsure about inserting a comma, read the sentence aloud and see if the sentence could be easily misread.

F. Use a comma on both sides of an interrupter.

Ex: *My uncle, a man of high distinction, died last week.*

***This** information within the commas is “extra” and is simply giving the reader more information about the subject.

***Hint:** Try removing the information between the commas and read the sentence aloud. If the sentence still makes sense, then you have placed the commas correctly. If it does not, go back and make sure you are only including the additional nonessential information.

Essential

Ex: *People who wear bright colors send an optimistic message.*

Nonessential

Ex: *My boss, wearing a red tie and a green shirt, radiated the holiday spirit.*

