

Where to Use Commas

Six Rules for Using Commas

Asbury University
Center for Academic Excellence

Rule 1: Use a comma between complete thoughts (independent clauses) that are connected by coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so). Place the comma **before** the coordinating conjunction.

- My sister is getting married soon, **so** I need to get fitted for my bridesmaid dress.
- James did not regret studying early for his Chemistry test, **for** he received an A.

Rule 2: Use a comma after introductory words, introductory phrases, or dependent clauses.

- “**Carole**, are you planning to leave soon?”
- **Finally**, I completed my exegesis paper.
- **On their way to the Michigan**, my parents stopped for lunch.
- **Since I was going to Wilmore anyway**, I was happy to have others ride with me.

Rule 3: Use a comma on **both sides** of words and phrases that interrupt and *which* clauses that come at the end of a sentence.

- John’s performance, **however**, was much longer than yours.
- His brother, **the king of all liars**, fabricated another story.
- Popeye made a spinach casserole, **which** was disgusting.

Rule 4: Use a comma between a direct quotation and the person who said it.

- “I’m not sure that I’ll be able to go,” Sherry cautioned.
- Jane gushed, “Oh, I love giraffes!”

Rule 5: Use a comma between items (words or phrases) in a series or list.

- I was thrilled to see **chocolate pudding, brownies, and chocolate chip cookies** offered for dessert today.
- I will need to **eat more vegetables, walk a mile a day, and say “no” to daily brownies** if I don’t want to buy bigger clothes.
- Marybeth has become a **strong, confident, independent** woman.

Rule 6: Use a comma in certain everyday material.

- Dates: Because **Monday, October 20, 2000**, was my birthday, I ate copious amounts of cake.
- Addresses: David’s uncle lives at **455 Newport Road, Harrodsburg, Kentucky**, with his two large dogs and some stray cats.
- Openings/Closings of letters: **Dear Mom, Sincerely,**
- Numbers: The average American spends **2,900** hours a year sleeping.