

Some Comma Rules

DO:

- Use a comma to separate independent clauses joined by and, or, but, for, and similar coordinating conjunctions.
Example: We are going to discuss it, and then we will decide.
She went out, but forgot her sweater.
- Use a comma to introduce a word or modifying phrase.
Example: Psychology, the study of the mind, is a complicated subject.
The man at the desk, Bob, gave me his card.
- Use a comma to introduce a quotation.
Example: He said to me, "This is it."
She turned to him and whispered, "I love you."
- Use a comma to introduce a question or statement that is preceded by thinking aloud or a mental question.
Example: I wondered, should I tell Dad about the car?
I thought to myself, this is the place.
- Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives when they modify the same noun.
Example: The small, soft, furry cat slept on the windowsill.
He is a tall, smart, funny, and interesting guy.
- Use a comma to separate contrasted elements in a sentence.
Example: The house was white, not blue.
That pen is mine, not yours.
- Use a comma to separate thousands or millions when writing numbers.
Example: The lottery jackpot was \$3,000,000.
The tax bill was \$2,346.88.
- Use a comma to separate parenthetical expressions. This is a phrase that could appear in parentheses to explain the meaning of a word or phrase.
Example: We went to Jamaica, a nation in the Caribbean, for our vacation.
The suicide squeeze, the most exciting play in baseball, is rarely seen these days.
- Use a comma to separate appositive phrases and vocative phrases. Similar to parenthetical expressions, appositive phrases help to define the meaning of a noun. Vocative phrases define who a person is in terms of their vocation or function.
Example: Biology, the study of life, was my favorite class in school.
Gasoline, a product made by refining oil, is expensive

Reverend Smith, the leader of the congregation, spoke last.
Anthony Masiello, the mayor of Buffalo, spoke at the dinner.
Mrs. Henderson, the coach, always drove us to practice.

DO NOT:

- Use a comma to separate two predicates, or verb phrases.
Example (incorrect): We checked the books and notified the lawyers.
(correct): We checked the books and notified the lawyers.
- Use a comma to separate a subject and verb, verb and object, or preposition and object.
Example (incorrect): Bob and Jane, ran to the store.
He was standing, over there.
During the night, the horse ran off.
(correct): Bob and Jane ran to the store.
He was standing over there.
During the night the horse ran off.
- Put a comma between an adjective or adverb and the word it modifies.
Example (incorrect): It was a red, house.
He ran, quickly.
(correct): It was a red house.
He ran quickly.
- Put a comma before the indirect part of a quotation.
Example (incorrect): 'The man said, that he didn't see it.
(correct): 'The man said that he didn't see it.
- Put a comma before or after the last thing in a series.
Example: (incorrect): I asked for, vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry, ice cream.
(correct): I asked for vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry ice cream.
- Use a comma to join two independent clauses where a stronger mark (such as a period or semicolon) is needed. This is called a comma splice, and is one of the most common errors in written English.
Example (incorrect): The election was over, our candidate had lost.
Since each independent clause stands on its own, consider making two sentences: The election was over. Our candidate had lost.
Or, add a conjunction, such as *and*, to connect the clauses. Then separate them with a comma: The election was over, and our candidate had lost.