

Comma Usage



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Comma Usage

Commas are some of the trickiest punctuation marks to master. The comma is also a mark with a lot of myths, like the idea that all long sentences need commas or that you should put a comma wherever you pause or breathe.

To master the comma, learn these 6 main comma uses:

Use #1: FANBOYS – (A.K.A – Avoiding the comma splice)

FANBOYS is a mnemonic device that can help you to remember the conjunctions: **f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r, **y**et, **s**o. These words help separate two independent clauses. Try thinking of this as a couple holding hands. They could stand on their own, but they prefer to be connected. Where their hands meet is where you find a comma plus the FANBOY. Adding the FANBOY helps you avoid an unwanted comma splice.

Example: Kayla wanted to go to class, but Simon didn't.



Use #2: Lists

Commas separate words in a list. In this case, the comma takes the place of the word "and".

Example: I ate pizza with cheese, pepperoni, onions, peppers, sausage, olives, and broccoli.

Use #3: Introductory Words, Phrases, and Clauses

Example: Usually, I go to Cape Cod for the weekend.

Example: At the end of the summer, I went to France.

Example: Despite her headache, Salma went to the Writing Center.

Comma Usage, Cont'd

Use #4: Addressing people or things in a sentence

Use a comma when you address someone. If the name comes first, the comma comes after the name. If the name comes last, the comma goes before the name. If the name is in the middle of the sentence, use commas before and after the name.

Good Example: Let's eat, Sara.

Bad Example: Let's eat Sara. (This means we're having Sara for dinner!)

Example: My father, Larry, is a professor at Bridgewater State University.

Use #5: Setting off unnecessary information

Use a comma to set apart extra information that is not essential to understand the sentence. Usually, we use a comma before who, which, and whose.

Example: Peter, the student from Mansfield, said he enjoyed his history class.

Example: My professor, smiling, told us we were having an exam.

Example: Brockton, which is also known as the City of Champions, is a great place to visit.

Note: Don't use commas before that.

Example: The book that I brought from home was very heavy.

Use #6: Multiple adjectives

Use commas to separate multiple adjectives that describe the same noun when the order of the adjectives is interchangeable and when you could use "and" between the adjectives.

Example: Jennifer has a long, colorful, silk scarf.

