

Facts on the Use of the Comma

- *Commas are the most frequently used marks of punctuation.*
 - *Commas must be used in certain places, not used in other places, and are optional in still other places.*
 - *Commas are used to separate certain parts of a sentence so that written communication will be clear and direct.*
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Rules for the Use of the Comma

1. **Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two main clauses.**
2. **Use commas to separate elements in a series.**
 - a. Elements in a series may be words, phrases, or clauses.
 - b. Two or more adjectives that modify the same noun may need to be separated with commas.
3. **Use a comma after an introductory element.**

Introductory elements include:

 - a. Introductory words
 - b. Transitional expressions
 - c. Prepositional phrases
 - d. Verbal phrases
 - e. Adverb clauses
4. **Use commas to separate interrupters from the rest of the sentence.**

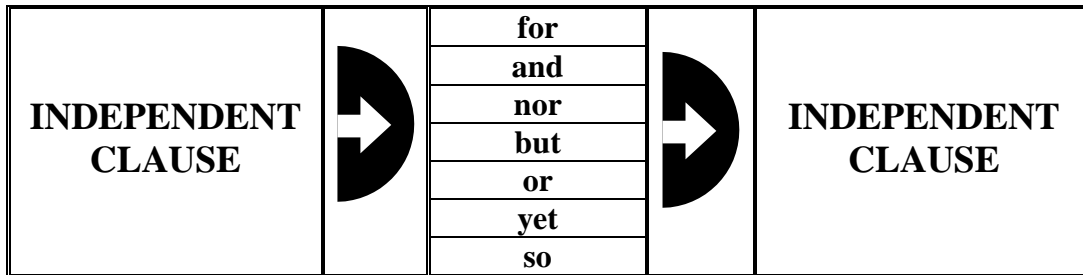
Interrupters include:

 - a. Parenthetical expressions
 - b. Non restrictive clauses
 - c. Non restrictive appositives
 - d. Non restrictive participial phrases
 - e. Words in direct address
 - f. Dates and addresses with two or more elements

When you join two main clauses with one of the coordinating conjunctions to form a compound sentence, use a comma before the conjunction.

Example: Betty placed the printed sheet on Howard's desk, and he picked it up and read it slowly.

Pattern for commas when coordinating conjunctions link independent clauses:



When you list three or more elements (words, phrases, clauses) in a series, separate them by commas. When the last two elements are joined by a coordinating conjunction, a comma before the conjunction is optional.

Example: In the LC, our tutors cover the areas of Math, Science, English, and Foreign Languages.

Pattern for commas in a series: word, word, and word
phrase, phrase, and phrase
clause, clause, and clause

When you use two or more adjectives to modify the same noun, separate them with commas if you can put *and* between the adjectives without changing the meaning or if you can easily reverse the order of the adjectives.

Example: Ron is a tall, dark, and handsome gentleman.
Joey is a neat, courteous little boy.
This is a dark, cold, drafty bedroom.

Use a comma after all introductory infinitive and participial phrases.

Example: Having climbed the steep trail up Bear Mountain, John decided to take pictures.

Use a comma after the following introductory words and transitional expressions.

Introductory Words:

next
first
second
third
moreover
however

similarly
nevertheless
therefore
indeed
yes
no

Transitional Expressions:

on the other hand
in a similar manner
in other words
for example
for instance
in fact
in addition
as a result

Example: In fact, there was no way to keep the back door closed.
Yes, we are safe in this room.
Certainly, I will sign that form for you.

Use a comma after introductory prepositional phrases of five or more words. However, you may need to use a comma after a shorter introductory prepositional phrase. If not, doing so would cause confusion.

Example: While we were eating, our cousins arrived from Georgia.
Shortly after eleven, thirty new recruits appeared.

Use commas to set off parenthetical expressions:

however	moreover	in fact
indeed	of course	after all
consequently	for example	I think
that is	for instance	therefore

Example: Therefore, the South is considered to be one of the fastest growing areas of the United States.

California and Florida, for example, both grow oranges.