

# Using Commas

*What is a comma?*

A comma is a punctuation mark used to separate the elements of a sentence into sections, improving the clarity of the sentence.

*A comma is used...*

⇒ **With coordinating conjunctions to connect independent clauses**

Coordinating conjunctions consist of *and, but, or, for, nor, so, or yet*.

*A comma looks like...*

- *The student did not come to class so he failed.*

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- *The student did not come to class, so he failed.*

⇒ **After introductory elements, phrases, or words**

Introductory clauses commonly begin with *after, although, as, because, if, since, when, and while*. Introductory phrases normally give the reader context for the sentence, helping the reader understand *when* or *why* the subsequent action took place. Some common introductory words include *well, yes, and however*.

- *Because the student was ill she made a doctor's appointment.*

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- *Because the student was ill, she made a doctor's appointment.*

⇒ **In the middle of a sentence to set off nonessential clauses, phrases, and words**

Place one comma before the nonessential information and one at the end. Information is nonessential if it can be removed from the sentence and the sentence still makes sense.

- *The topic of this class is really interesting! The professor on the other hand is rather boring.*

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- *The topic of this class is really interesting! The professor, on the other hand, is rather boring.*

⇒ **To separate elements in a series of three or more**

- *I have a paper a project and a presentation due by Friday.*

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- *I have a paper, a project, and a presentation due by Friday.*

⇒ **To separate two or more coordinate adjectives describing the same noun**

Coordinate adjectives have equal status within the sentence; for example, if the adjectives can be easily reversed and retain their meaning.

- *My favorite food is pepperoni, deep-dish pizza. (non-coordinate)*

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- *My cousin is a difficult, cranky child. (coordinate)*

⇒ **Near the end of a sentence to indicate a pause or shift in tone**

- *I said I wanted a pizza not a hotdog.*

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- *I said I wanted a pizza, not a hotdog.*

# Using Commas

*A comma is used to...*

*A comma looks like...*

⇒ To set off all geographical names

• *Columbus Ohio is the state capital.*

• *Columbus, Ohio is the state capital.*

⇒ To set off items in dates (aside from month and day)

• *Josh was born on April 4 1990.*

• *Josh was born on April 4, 1990.*

⇒ To set off addresses (aside from street number and name)

• *My new address is 1829 Oak Drive Kent OH 44240.*

• *My new address is 1829 Oak Drive, Kent, OH 44240.*

⇒ To set off titles in names

• *Marvin Truss Ph.D. will be my professor next semester.*

• *Marvin Truss, Ph.D., will be my professor next semester.*

⇒ To indicate a shift from the author's own thoughts or writing to a quotation

• *In response to my question, she replied "I'd love to come to your birthday dinner!"*

• *In response to my questions, she replied, "I'd love to come to your birthday dinner!"*

⇒ To prevent confusion or misreading of a sentence

• *To Hannah Mother Teresa was a role model.*

• *To Hannah, Mother Teresa was a role model.*