

COMMAS

Commas help readers understand the words that go together in sentences, and the words that hold most importance. They divide and separate words to ensure a clear delivery of message. Ignorance of comma rules indicates carelessness and unaware of the basic writing rules.

Similar to speaking, commas serve as pauses in writing. Sentences are broken down into smaller logical pieces providing readers a clearer meaning.

Commas can become tricky, so here is a list of things that can help you with!

- **Separating ideas in a list of series words**

A comma is used to separate the items in a series of words that are more than three. A series refers to a group of words that has a similar value and function.

Examples:

Series of words

- The old lady bought us *apples, oranges,* and a *pineapple* this morning.
- I should share my *cards, pens, papers,* and *erasers* to my siblings.

Series of clauses

- The school promised the students *that it would provide the campus a water-refill station,* *that it would build an extra lane for the handicapped,* and *that it would provide a free lunch* every end of the month,

Series of phrases

- His mom takes a lot of time *to cook bacon, to toast bread, and to prepare his milk.*

In the above examples, the series contains three to four items with equal value and rank. Notice that a comma is also placed at the end of the series before the word “and”. This is what we call a *serial comma*, indicating the final item in a series.

- **Using a comma to describe a subject with two or more adjectives of equal rank.**

A comma is used when we provide more than two interchangeable adjectives in a row to a subject.

Examples:

- He owns a well-behaved, responsible pet.

He owns a responsible, well-behaved pet.

- That kid is an all-around, motivated student.

That kid is a motivated, all-around student.

- I like a sensible, mature discussion.

I like a mature, sensible discussion.

- The employer wants to develop his overly shy, passive employee.

The employer wants to develop his overly passive, shy employee.

Note: The adjectives can have their position interchanged as the words are of equal rank.

- **Using commas to describe an action with two or more adverbs.**

A comma is used to separate a series of adverbs in a sentence.

Examples:

- He drove the car *hastily, noisily, and effortlessly*.
- My pet wags its tail *slowly, gracefully, and beautifully*.
- The students listened to the discussion *calmly, quietly, and thoroughly*.
- For sure, the government warned the citizens *peacefully, gently, and passionately*.

- **Using commas to join independent clauses.**

An independent clause is a clause that can stand alone as a simple sentence. It contains both the subject and a predicate.

Examples:

- I would like to buy a pizza. I think my family would love to have one.
 - *I would like to buy a pizza, and I think my family would love to have one too.*
- He is extremely tired. He needs to get home as soon as possible.
 - *He is extremely tired, so he needs to get home as soon as possible.*
- I am aiming to get an A star. I am struggling with my Mathematics subject.
 - *I am aiming to get an A star, yet I am struggling with my Mathematics subject.*
- Today is Sunday. The test is on Tuesday.
 - *Today is Sunday, and the test is on Tuesday.*

Note: A comma can possibly be omitted if the clauses are short.

Examples:

- He dances while she cooks.
- I eat and she cleans.
- I am busy so he left me alone.
- She talks while the kid laughs.

- **Using commas to join independent to dependent clauses.**

A dependent clause is an incomplete thought that cannot stand alone a sentence. Often, a dependent clause is recognized through a dependent marker (after, although, as, because, before, whether, etc.)

Examples:

- **Because of the heavy rain** (dependent), *classes were cancelled* (independent).
- **After going through a hard time**, *he became more decisive and independent.*
- **Although the event was successful**, *most of the VIPs did not even congratulate us.*
- **As the days go on**, *we begin to think maturely and wisely.*

- **Using commas for setting off non-essential descriptive words and phrases.**

Non-essential or non-restrictive words possess no value to the entire meaning of a sentence.

They usually begin with a relative pronoun such as s who, whom, whose, that, and which),

Examples:

- James, who is Jane's brother, won the spelling competition.
- Jane and her friends, who spent three days fishing, are back in school again.
- My cup, which has a black cover, fell and broke.
- Jonathan, my cousin's fiancée, is inviting us for dinner.

- **Using a comma to indicate introduction**

Some words function as an introductory element. Using them requires a comma.

Examples:

- Yes, why not?
- Sure, that would be great!
- No, you can't attend the party!
- Honestly, I didn't really like the food.

- **Using a comma after a transition word**

A transition word refers to the words that are used to connect between ideas in a sentence, making it more logical to read and understand.

Examples:

- The characters in the book faced a dilemma. **However**, they overcame it with teamwork.
- The result was successful. **Hence**, he got the scholarship.

- It seems like a happy place. **Likewise**, the people appear to be kind.
- The students have attended a series of events. **In particular**, they have experienced water-related activities such as boating and kayaking,

- **Using a comma to set off a name, a nickname, a title, or an endearment.**

Some people want to address someone with a special name; hence, a comma is required when writing it.

Examples:

- Yes, **good friend**, I will do it just like the old times.
- Will he, **John**, open the gate?
- I will meet dad, **my old man**, at the airport.
- Why would you, **my President**, offer me this position?

- **Separating days from months and years**

A comma is needed when writing a complete date.

Examples:

- The research commenced last *June 23, 2019*.
- We should visit Hong Kong on *December 01, 2019*.
- The store stopped the promotion last Wednesday, *May 08, 2019*.
- My parents will take the bags tomorrow, *July 08, 2019*.

- **Using a comma for writing addresses and names with titles or professions.**

Examples:

- Kelapa Gading, North Jakarta, Indonesia
- Odi Street, Koronadal City, Philippines
- James Owen, Mathematics Professor
- Pauline Mendez, Internal medicine

Note: Commas can also be used to enclose degree titles.

Examples:

- Johan Mendell, PhD.
- Oscar Smith, M.D.
- James Cooper, MESL.
- Daisy Johnson, MAEd.

- **Using a comma to introduce direct quotations.**

Examples:

- John said, “Put all the buckets in the room.”
- Saint Marcellin said, “To educate children, you must love them.”
- “I dislike parties,” Jane proclaimed.

□ “Why don’t we go hiking?” my friend suggested.

*Don’t use a comma after direct speech if the direct speech ends with a question mark or exclamation mark.

EXERCISES

A. Separating ideas in a list of series words

❖ Use a comma to separate the items in the list.

1. Apples apricots strawberries and oranges are my favorite fruits.
2. The company will hire a secretary a guard and an accountant.
3. I would love to hear your stories your jokes and laughter.
4. He promised us that he would give us a job that he would provide us an apartment and would give a food allowance.
5. He creates crafts from different materials: bamboo stalks coconut leaves and cogon grass.
6. I will buy lots of stickers cards pens and pencils.

B. Using a comma to describe a subject with two or more adjectives of equal rank.

❖ Indicate YES or NO whether the sentences below need a comma. Add the comma if YES.

1. We are going to an expensive summer resort. _____
2. He likes to chat with a responsive passionate client. _____
3. My camera became an old cheap item. _____
4. The state issued a gentle house reminder. _____
5. He met a beautiful mysterious woman. _____

6. It was a fabulous French restaurant. _____

C. Using commas to describe an action with two or more adverbs.

❖ **Place the comma where they correctly belong. Some sentences need no comma at all.**

1. He talks gently calmly and innocently.
2. The people argued loudly angrily and recklessly.
3. Gladly respectfully openly the girl received the award.
4. The little kid asked excitedly bravely and excitedly about the incoming events.
5. The accident made me run tensely and speedily.
6. He was very shy that he talked awkwardly and anxiously.

D. Using commas to join independent clauses.

❖ **Combine the following sentences using a comma.**

1. He brought an umbrella. He will not get wet.
2. My mom made me a coffee. It will brighten up my day.
3. He sweeps. She cleans the dishes.
4. I am moving to the next city. It is easier for me to go to work.
5. He drives the car. He can reach the place as soon as possible.
6. The book seems nice. It is very interesting.

E. Using commas to join independent to dependent clauses.

❖ **Combine the dependent clause to the independent clause to generate a complete sentence.**

1. He disappeared. When his teacher arrived.
2. Because of sickness. The child was not able to attend classes.

3. When he took the glass. The kitchen was a mess.
4. When the TV was turned on. Everyone gathered.
5. I sensed hostility. When the gang arrived.
6. His dad sends him a letter. Whenever he is sad.

F. Using commas for setting off non-essential descriptive words and phrases.

❖ **Fill in the gap with non-essential words to complete the sentences. Do not forget to place your comma.**

1. John _____ goes to the office every day.
2. This vase _____ was a gift from my uncle.
3. Marie _____ received an order to exempt her student from the exam.
4. The new computer system _____ helps teachers encode their attendance efficiently.
5. The marketplace _____ offers a new investment.
6. The comedian _____ chuckled as the audience laughed.

G. Using a comma to indicate introduction

❖ **Complete the introductory element with a comma and ideas.**

1. Hey _____.
2. Why _____.
3. Sure _____.
4. That can't be _____.
5. Impressive _____.
6. Definitely _____.

H. Using a comma after a transition word

❖ **Indicate the appropriate transition word together with a comma to complete the gap.**

1. He won the award. _____ a medal was given.

2. His jokes were excellent. _____ the officers did not like it.
3. The pillow is really soft. _____ the sofa has almost the same texture.
4. The report made a change. _____ it has not affected the salary offers.
5. He provided us with great ideas. _____ he made some changes in our policy.
6. His effort was commendable. _____ it was really a dangerous feat.

I. Using a comma to set off a name, a nickname, a title, or an endearment.

- ❖ **Indicate whether the sentence is punctuated properly or not. Write YES or NO. Fix the sentence if NO**

1. That man, my lovely doctor, helped me recover quickly. _____
2. His father a good man, donated a large sum of money for the local development. _____
3. Could you Jenna open the can, please? _____
4. My mom, Jennifer, will spend the week here. _____
5. I would love to have my uncle, the great mechanic, to stay with us for a month. _____
6. Hey there, old pal. _____

J. Separating days from months and years

- ❖ **Correct the structure of the sentences below.**

1. He began his career on June, 6th.
2. It was on July, 9 2010, when my mom brought me to the theme park,
3. I went to a festival in Japan last year on January 5 2018.
4. American culture was celebrated in Jeddah on July 03 2019,.
5. A powerful earthquake rattled California on 6th, July, 2019.

6. I became a dad just last year, May 10 2018.

K. Use a comma for writing addresses and names with titles or professions.

❖ **Place the comma where they belong in the following sentences.**

1. Does he live in Barcelona Spain?
2. He works at Boulevard Street Kelapa Gading North Jakarta Indonesia.
3. Mr. Solem an English professor is very passionate about his job.
4. Dr. James Hall MA gave a motivational speech to the students.
5. The linguist Clair Summers made an impact on language studies.
6. His professor, Mr. James Lambert MBA proposed a new accounting method.

L. Using a comma to introduce direct quotations.

❖ **Place comma in the sentences below to ensure clarity in meaning.**

1. "Please provide us with a paper" the students said.
2. My mom told me "Wash your clothes every Saturday."
3. Martin Luther once said "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."
4. Trump shows respect to women. In fact he said this in his speech " I have tremendous respect for women."
5. The officer shouted "Do not go to the beach, a storm is coming."
6. The police stopped us by saying "Visitors are off limits."

ANSWER KEY

M. Separating ideas in a list of series words

❖ **Use a comma to separate the items in the list.**



ANSWERS

1. Apples, apricots, strawberries, and oranges are my favorite fruits.
2. The company will hire a secretary, a guard, and an accountant.
3. I would love to hear your stories, your jokes, and laughter.
4. He promised us that he would give us a job, that he would provide us an apartment, and would give a food allowance.
5. He creates crafts from different materials: bamboo stalks, coconut leaves, and cogon grass.
6. I will buy lots of stickers cards, pens, and pencils.

N. Using a comma to describe a subject with two or more adjectives of equal rank.

- ❖ Indicate YES or NO whether the sentences below need a comma. Add the comma if YES.

ANSWERS

1. We are going to an expensive summer resort. NO
2. He likes to chat with a responsive, passionate client. YES
3. My camera became an old cheap item. YES
4. The state issued a gentle house reminder. NO
5. He met a beautiful, mysterious woman. YES
6. It was a fabulous French restaurant. NO

O. Using commas to describe an action with two or more adverbs.

- ❖ Place the comma where they correctly belong. Some sentences need no comma at all.

ANSWERS

1. He talks gently, calmly, and innocently.
2. The people argued loudly, angrily, and recklessly.
3. Gladly, respectfully, and openly, the girl received the award.
4. The little kid asked excitedly, bravely, and excitedly about the incoming events.
5. The accident made me run tensely and speedily.
6. He was very shy that he talked awkwardly and anxiously.

P. Using commas to join independent clauses.

- ❖ **Combine the following sentences using a comma.**

ANSWERS

1. He brought an umbrella, so he will not get wet.
2. My mom made me a coffee, so it will brighten up my day.
3. He sweeps, while she cleans the dishes.
4. I am moving to the next city, so it would be easier for me to go to work.
5. He drives the car, so he can reach the place as soon as possible.
6. The book seems nice, and it looks very interesting.

Q. Using commas to join independent to dependent clauses.

- ❖ **Combine the dependent clause to the independent clause to generate a complete sentence.**

ANSWERS

1. He disappeared when his teacher arrived.
2. Because of sickness, the child was not able to attend classes.
3. When he took the glass, the kitchen was a mess.
4. When the TV was turned on, everyone gathered.
5. I sensed hostility when the gang arrived.
6. His dad sends him a letter whenever he is sad.

R. Using commas for setting off non-essential descriptive words and phrases.

- ❖ **Fill in the gap with non-essential words to complete the sentences. Do not forget to place your comma.**

ANSWERS

1. John, who is my neighbor, goes to the office every day.
2. This vase, whose color is black, was a gift from my uncle.
3. Marie, who is a teacher, received an order to exempt her student from the exam.
4. The new computer system, which was newly developed, helps teachers encode their attendance efficiently.
5. The marketplace, which is near my office, offers a new investment.
6. The comedian, who wears a red coat, chuckled as the audience laughed.

S. Using a comma to indicate introduction

- ❖ **Complete the introductory element with a comma and ideas.**

ANSWERS

1. Hey, what's up?
2. Why, what happened?
3. Sure, we can go out tomorrow.
4. That can't be, it must be a mistake.
5. Impressive, you did an excellent job.
6. Definitely, I will keep in touch.

T. Using a comma after a transition word

- ❖ **Indicate the appropriate transition word together with a comma to complete the gap.**

ANSWERS

1. He won the award. Hence, a medal was given.
2. His jokes were excellent. However, the officers did not like it.
3. The pillow is really soft. Similarly, the sofa has almost the same texture.
4. The report made a change. On the other hand, it has not affected the salary offers.
5. He provided us with great ideas. Additionally, he made some changes in our policy.
6. His effort was commendable. However, it was really a dangerous feat.

U. Using a comma to set off a name, a nickname, a title, or an endearment.

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4. My mom, Jennifer, will spend the week here. _____
5. I would love to have my uncle, the great mechanic, to stay with us for a month. _____
6. Hey there, old pal. _____

ANSWERS

1. That man, my lovely doctor, helped me recover quickly. YES
2. His father, a good man, donated a large sum of money for the local development. NO
3. Could you, Jenna, open the can, please? YES
4. My mom, Jennifer, will spend the week here. YES
5. I would love to have my uncle, the great mechanic, to stay with us for a month. YES
6. Hey there, old pal. YES

V. Separating days from months and years

- ❖ Correct the structure of the sentences below.

ANSWERS

1. He began his career on **June 6th**.
2. It was on **July 9**, 2010, when my mom brought me to the theme park,
3. I went to a festival in Japan last year on **January 5, 2018**.

4. American culture was celebrated in Jeddah on **July 03, 2019**.
5. A powerful earthquake rattled California on **6th July 2019**.
6. I became a dad just last year, **May 10, 2018**.

W. Use a comma for writing addresses and names with titles or professions.

❖ **Place the comma where they belong in the following sentences.**

ANSWERS

1. Does he live in **Barcelona, Spain**?
2. He works at **Boulevard Street, Kelapa Gading, North Jakarta, Indonesia**.
3. Mr. Solem, **an English professor**, is very passionate about his job.
4. Dr. James **Hall**, MA gave a motivational speech to the students.
5. The linguist, **Clair Summers**, made an impact on language studies.
6. His professor, Mr. James **Lambert**, MBA proposed a new accounting method.

X. Using a comma to introduce direct quotations.

❖ **Place comma in the sentences below to ensure clarity in meaning.**

ANSWERS

1. “Please provide us with a **paper**,” the students said.
2. My mom told **me**, “Wash your clothes every Saturday.”
3. Martin Luther once **said**, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.”
4. Trump shows respect to women. In fact he said this in his **speech**, “ I have tremendous respect for women.”

5. The officer **shouted**, “Do not go to the beach, a storm is coming.”
6. The police stopped us by **saying**, “Visitors are off limits.”