WHAT IS A COMMA?

A comma is a punctuation mark that identifies a break between items within a sentence. Commas separate sentence clauses, identify extra information about a subject, and divide items in a series of words.

# Comma Rules. Here are some basic rules for comma usage that you can follow to ensure that your writing is grammatically correct. Add your own examples to test your understanding.

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| **Rule** | **Description** | **Example** |
| 1. Use a comma to separate two independent clauses that are joined by a coordinating conjunction. | Commas are used to join one independent clause (a group of words with a subject, object, and verb) to another independent clause within a sentence. If the sentence has two independent clauses, join them by placing a comma after the first part of the sentence and following it with a coordinating conjunction such as "*and*" or "*but*.” Coordinating conjunctions include *and, or, for, so, nor, but, yet.* |  |
| 2. Use a comma after an introductory phrase. | A comma follows a phrase at the beginning of a sentence that depends on the next clause of the sentence to make meaning. The second clause is called an independent clause. |  |
| 3. Use a comma after a conjunctive adverb. | A conjunctive adverb is a transitional word that can either join two related clauses or introduce a sentence. Some conjunctive adverbs include *however, nevertheless, furthermore, also, hence, anyway,* and *moreover*. Use a comma after a conjunctive adverb whether it comes at the beginning of a sentence or in the middle. |  |
| **4.** Use commas to separate items in a list. | These items could be adjectives, adverbs, or nouns. Known as the Oxford Comma, this comma is technically optional. When dividing a list of items, the Oxford Comma is the final comma in a list of subject words, following the second last item which usually precedes “*and* or another coordinating conjunction.” |  |
| 5. Use commas to separate nonrestrictive clauses. | A nonrestrictive clause provides nonessential information about the main clause of a sentence. Nonrestrictive clauses, which typically reveal additional information about a subject of the independent clause, are placed after a noun in the clause and set off by commas. Setting off the clause with commas makes it similar to a parenthetical phrase. |  |
| 6. Use commas to separate appositives from a subject. | An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that adds information to a noun it follows. The appositive is set off by commas to indicate that it is not essential to the sentence, but, like the nonrestrictive clause, provides useful information. |  |
| 7. Use commas to set off a direct quotation. | Use a comma to introduce and end a quotation when it does not fall at the end of a sentence. |  |
| 8. Use commas to separate a specific date from the rest of the sentence. | Use a comma to separate the day from the year and another comma to separate the year from the rest of the sentence in a month/day/year format. |  |