

Commas

Commas with Coordinating Conjunctions

Use commas to separate two independent clauses in a sentence that are joined by any of the seven coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS): for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

An independent clause has a subject and verb and can stand on its own as a complete sentence.

Examples: I like ice cream, **but** I love cheesecake.
The lion was tired, **so** it decided to take a nap.

Commas with Introductory Elements

Use commas after introductory clauses, phrases, or words.

- An introductory clause is a dependent clause, a clause with a subject and verb that cannot stand on its own as a sentence, which introduces the main part of the sentence.

Example: **When I am older**, I want to become a teacher.

- An introductory phrase also introduces the main part of the sentence, but it is not a complete clause because it lacks a subject and/or verb.

Example: **To fulfill my goals**, I would like to begin by working with underprivileged youth.

- An introductory word is a transitional word that facilitates flow between two sentences.

Examples: **However**, John wants to become a forensic analyst.
Therefore, spinach is an excellent source of folic acid.

Commas with Non-Restrictive Information

Use a set of commas in the middle of a sentence to set off non-restrictive information. Non-restrictive information is any information that can be taken out of a sentence without affecting its meaning.

Examples: Maria, **my mother**, is very intelligent.
Many animals, **such as cats**, enjoy taking naps.

Commas with Lists of Items

Use commas to separate three or more words or phrases in a series or list. The last comma in the list is known as the Oxford comma (or the serial comma) and is optional. However, since the Oxford comma adds clarity to the items in your list, we recommend that you use it.

Examples: He bought **pencils, erasers, and crayons** at the store.
John, Clarice, and I ate breakfast at Los Gatos Café yesterday.

Commas with Quotes

Use a comma to separate a quote from the rest of the sentence.

Example: My mom yelled, **“Do the dishes!”**

Commas with Dates, Addresses, and Numbers

Use commas in dates, addresses, and numbers with more than three digits.

Examples: Today is February **4**, 2013.
Lydia is from **Geneva, Switzerland**.
Professor Smith’s library contains over **12,345** books!

Commas with Coordinating Adjectives

Use commas between two coordinating adjectives in a sentence. To test the comma, see if you can insert “and” between the adjectives.

Example: Alex is a **tall, lanky** guy.

Commas after Verbs

Do **NOT** use a comma directly after a verb.

Example: ~~My friend goes, to school in Paris, France.~~
My friend goes to school in Paris, France.

Activity

Place commas where needed in the following sentences.

1. Samantha asked “Are these your crackers?”
2. Mitchell’s favorite television shows are *One Tree Hill* *Dawson’s Creek* *Teen Wolf* and *Vampire Diaries*.
3. Furthermore I would like to thank Mrs. O’ Donnell my first grade teacher for teaching me how to write in cursive.

4. Jessy was born on July 17 1983 in Los Angeles California
5. If I won 1000000 dollars I would buy a Ferrari a diamond necklace and a Cartier watch.
6. I've traveled to many countries yet I've never visited Australia.
7. Andrew my funny talkative co-worker is a huge fan of the San Jose Sharks.
8. I have never been to a soccer game nor would I ever want to go to one.
9. When we went out for dinner Michael ordered a steak and Alyssa ordered lobster.
10. Sarah fell off her longboard broke her arm and sustained severe bruising.

Answer Key for Activity

1. Samantha asked, "Are these your crackers?"
2. Mitchell's favorite television shows are *One Tree Hill*, *Dawson's Creek*, *Teen Wolf*, and *Vampire Diaries*.
3. Furthermore, I would like to thank Mrs. O' Donnell, my first grade teacher, for teaching me how to write in cursive.
4. Jessy was born on July 17, 1983 in Los Angeles, California.
5. If I won 1,000,000 dollars, I would buy a Ferrari, a diamond necklace, and a Cartier watch.
6. I've traveled to many countries, yet I've never visited Australia.
7. Andrew, my funny, talkative co-worker, is a huge fan of the San Jose Sharks.
8. I have never been to a soccer game, nor would I ever want to go to one.
9. When we went out for dinner, Michael ordered a steak, and Alyssa ordered lobster.
10. Sarah fell off her longboard, broke her arm, and sustained severe bruising.

References

Lunsford, Andrea. *The Everyday Writer*. 4th Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2010. Print.