

Comma Sense

How & When to Use The Comma.

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First and foremost, commas are important for clarity.



Without commas, the headline sounds like she wants to cook her family.

Even though know we know this can't be true, it's momentarily confusing.

Using commas is important to help with meaning too:

Notice the subtle difference between the following:

1) Despite the popularity of full-bodied cigars these days, mild cigars are still the kings of the smoke room.

2) Despite the popularity of full-bodied cigars, these days mild cigars are still the kings of the smoke room.

Sentence one places the emphasis “these days” on the popularity of full-bodied cigars. Sentence two places it on mild cigars. Both are grammatically correct, but the emphasis is slightly different.

Despite untrue myths, there are specific rules for comma usage.

Ever heard this before?

“Whenever you hear a pause in a sentence, put a comma there.”

...that couldn't be more wrong.

There's no mystical concept behind using commas, no guessing games. There are specific *rules* that make using a comma easy.

and here are the most common...

Common Comma Rules:

- Use a comma when joining two complete sentences with a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS).
- Use a comma after introductory words, phrases, and transitional devices.
- Use commas to set apart non-essential words, phrases, and transitional devices.
- Use commas between items in a series.
- Use commas before and after a quote and when addressing someone.

Use a Comma When Joining Two Complete Sentences With a Coordinating Conjunction

(FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*):

*I finally saved enough money to go on a trip, **yet** I can't decide where to go.*

*I've always wanted to go to New York and stay in a nice hotel, **or** I could just blow the money in Vegas again.*

note: a complete thought comes before and after the FANBOYS, so a comma is used.

Use a Comma After Introductory Words, Phrases, and Transitional devices:

Indeed, *maybe I should go to New York.*

To get a good room, *I'll look up spots on the internet.*

According to my research, *I can save a bunch by booking ahead of time.*

As I learn more, *New York looks better and better to me.*

Note: transitional words and phrases embedded in a sentence also apply here.

Vegas, **however**, *isn't nearly as cold as New York this time of year.*

Walking around, **after all**, *is cheaper than taking a taxi.*

Again, use commas to avoid confusion.

While driving my girlfriend screamed, "I just saw Elvis."

While driving, my girlfriend screamed, "I just saw Elvis."

The momentary confusion after the introductory element is distracting. Readers will figure out that the writer isn't driving his girlfriend, but it's a momentary bit of confusion that distracts the reader and detracts from an essay's "coherence."

Use Commas to Set Apart Non-Essential Words or Phrases:

Words and phrases that interrupt and that aren't essential to the sentence should be surrounded by commas.

*New York, **then**, is probably the place I'll visit.*

*The gambling in Las Vegas, **on the other hand**, keeps making me re-think my decision.*

*The live shows, **now that I think about it**, are pretty fun too.*

*Las Vegas, **which is looking better and better**, also offers me a chance to win some money or comps.*

note: taking non-essential info out will still leave a complete sentence.

Use Commas Between Items in a Series (*a list*):

After all, Vegas has gambling, shows, and cheap buffets.

New York is expensive, far away, and freezing cold.

note: a comma goes before the "and" in a list to separate all items.

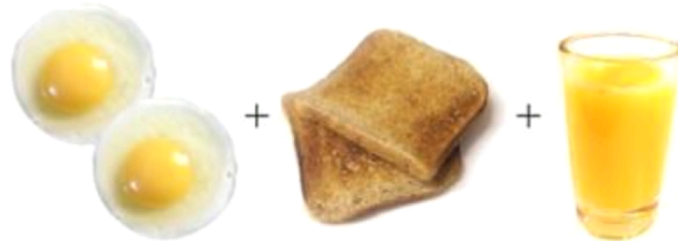
I don't care what the University of Oxford says...

WHY I STILL USE THE OXFORD COMMA

shortee.tumblr.com

WITH:

I had eggs, toast, and orange juice.



WITHOUT:

I had eggs, toast and orange juice.



WHY I STILL USE THE OXFORD COMMA

www.sportscasualblog.com

WITH:

After beating the Steelers, Tim Tebow thanked his parents, God, and Ms. Trunchbull.



Thanks, everyone!

WITHOUT:

After beating the Steelers, Tim Tebow thanked his parents, God and Ms. Trunchbull.



With the **Oxford Comma**:
We invited the rhinoceri, Washington, and Lincoln.



Without the Oxford Comma:
We invited the rhinoceri, Washington and Lincoln.



Use Commas Before and After a Quote and When Addressing Someone or Interjecting:

“You’ve got to bet big to win big,” my friend Romeo always says.

*At the end of the night I always ask him, “So, Romeo, how did the betting big go?”
Romeo usually has the same response...*

“Not so good, bro. Can I borrow ten bucks for some steak and eggs?”

Again, using a comma correctly can avoid confusion:

Let's eat grandpa.

Let's eat, grandpa.

**correct punctuation can
save a person`s life.**



STOP CLUBBING, BABY SEALS

Once again, punctuation makes all the difference ...

Finally, the use of punctuation can entirely change meaning too. Read the following two letters that use exactly the same words—change the punctuation around, and see how it goes from a love letter to a break up letter.

Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy-will you let me be yours?

Jane

Dear John,

I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be?

Yours,

Jane

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