

The Basics of Grammar: Commas

Punctuation is an area of writing where no one notices when you get it right - but everyone notices when you get it wrong. In this post, we will look at how to use commas correctly.

Commas

When I was in school, I was taught that the basic rule for using commas was, “anytime you want the reader to take a breath between words, use a comma.” Well, I hope my high school grammar teachers never find this, because that’s not always true. The following four scenarios describe when you need to use commas.

Use a comma when connecting two sentences.

Generally speaking, if you are using the words **for**, **nor**, **or**, **so**, **but** and **yet** there’s a good chance you will need a comma before these words.

I am tired, but I will still work hard.

Notice how “I am tired” could be its own sentence. However, it’s connect to another sentence “I will still work hard”.

Other Examples:

I will lend you money, but you will need to pay me back.

She will not play the game, nor will she follow the rules.

Either I can find a babysitter, or you can babysit for me.

I expected that Mario would win the race, and that’s exactly what he did.

Use a comma when noting a series of three or more things. If you are only listing two things, don’t use a comma.

The butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker were all in the bar.

I like ice cream and brownies.

When beginning a sentence, use a comma after However, For example, and any other introduction.

However, the house was eventually destroyed by the fire.

For example, making your own soup will much healthier.

Use a comma when interrupting yourself in a sentence or inserting a pause.

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Julio, the current class president, attended the meeting.

Madeline, of course, was the favorite to win.

Tell me, Susan, what you want me to do!

If you would like help automatically finding suggestions when to use commas, check out grammarly.com