

8 Comma Rules

Directions: After each rule and example, add commas to the sentences where needed.

1) Use commas to separate items in a list of three or more.

Remember that an “item” may refer to a noun, verb, or adjective phrase.

Note: Usage of a comma to separate the second-to-last from the last item is optional.

Example: I need to buy eggs milk lettuce and bread.

I need to buy eggs, milk, lettuce, and bread.

1. Carlos wants to visit Paris Italy Germany and China.
2. My favorite colors are blue red and pink.
3. I like to go hiking fishing swimming and camping during summer.
4. I have to clean my room walk the dog and take out the trash.
5. The tree is very tall old and green.
6. I need to visit my mother wash my car and buy six stamps.

2) Use a comma to separate independent clauses (complete thoughts) when they are joined by the following conjunctions:

<i>and</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>nor</i>	<i>so</i>	<i>but</i>	<i>yet</i>
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Note: The comma should come *before* the conjunction.

Example: I want to buy the new jacket but it is too expensive.

I want to buy the new jacket, but it is too expensive.

In this example, there are two independent clauses:

#1: “*I want to buy the new jacket.*” (complete thought)

#2 “*It is too expensive.*” (complete thought)

These clauses are separated by a **comma** before the conjunction “**but**”.

1. We can go to the zoo or we can go to the movie theater.
2. They like chocolate but they like vanilla better.
3. We will go to the restaurant now for we are very hungry.
4. I do not like biology nor do I like chemistry.

5. James wants to leave now yet we must wait for his little brother.
6. Terry is working on a project and he should be finished with it next week.

3) Use a comma to separate a dependent clause (incomplete thought) from an independent clause (complete thought).

Here are some examples of sentences with dependent and independent clauses:

- 1) When I get older, I will be able to drive. → (Dependent), (Independent).
- 2) Here is my truck, an old Ford. → (Independent), (Dependent).
- 3) If you are good, I will buy you a toy. → (Dependent), (Independent).

Example: Without water the plant will die.

Without water, the plant will die.

1. In five minutes the building will be closed.
2. When I get home I am going to brush my teeth.
3. Until I reach my goal I will not stop working.
4. If I get a new job I will be very happy.
5. To become an astronaut it takes much hard work and determination.
6. Because she is only twelve she is not old enough to drive.

4) Use a comma(s) to separate any word or phrase from the rest of the sentence that is not essential to the sentence's meaning. This phrase usually provides extra information about the subject.

Here are some examples of sentences with words/phrases that are not essential to the sentence's meaning:

- 1) My brother, a 26 year old male, is watching TV.
- 2) Amy Rivers, my best friend, is going to the mall today.
- 3) Tonight, however, will be very exciting.

Example: My mother on the other hand does not like chocolate.

My mother, on the other hand, does not like chocolate.

1. Daniel Garrison a farmer wakes up very early.
2. I however am very thirsty.
3. The car a 1967 ford mustang is very fast.
4. When school ends today at 3:15 p.m. we will play soccer.
5. Gold watches for example are going on sale today.
6. My favorite color navy blue is very popular.

5) Use comma to separate a quotation from the rest of a sentence.

Example: “We need to buy more sugar” she said “before it runs out!”

“We need to buy more sugar,” she said, “before it runs out!”

1. “I am tired” he muttered.
2. He said “We need to lower taxes!”
3. “If I don’t wake up in time” he whispered “I will be in trouble.”
4. “Today will be rainy” the weatherman said with a frown.
5. The boy watched his mother and wondered “Could I ever be that strong?”
6. “Okay” spoke the teacher excitedly “Time’s up!”

6) Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of a sentence.

Example: Hi how are you?

Hi, how are you?

1. Yes I would like more water please.
2. Sorry we do not have enough room.
3. Well I hope the problem will be fixed soon.
4. However I am very good at math.
5. Wait is there another way?
6. Unfortunately we do not have enough time.

7) Use a comma to separate the name of a town from a country or state.

Example: I live in Chapel Hill North Carolina.

I live in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

1. We are moving to Spokane Washington.
2. I visited Florence Italy last summer.
3. The hurricanes hit Tulsa Oklahoma and Destin Florida.

8) Use a comma to separate the day of the week, the day of the month, and the year.

Example: Today is Thursday April 18th 1943.

Today is Thursday, April 18th, 1943.

1. Tomorrow will be Sunday December 2nd.
2. George Washington was born on February 22nd 1732.
3. I will be sixteen on Tuesday July 6th 1582.