


COMMA GUIDE

IN COMPOUND SENTENCES

When joining two or more independent clauses (complete thoughts) with a coordinating conjunction, place a comma **before** the coordinating conjunction.




INDEPENDENT CLAUSE,  INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

 I would have been happy to help her, but I was mortally wounded.

FANBOYS

FANBOYS is an acronym for the seven coordinating conjunctions: **For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, and So.**




If the words on either side of the coordinating conjunction can stand alone, add a comma before the conjunction. If they cannot, do not add a comma.

-  I love you, but your feet are too big.
-  Her heart is full of bile, and her mouth is full of lies.
-  He went to heaven but couldn't afford the entrance fee.

BETWEEN ITEMS IN A SERIES




Use commas to separate words and word groups in a simple series of three or more items.


-  She registered for physics, defense against the dark arts, and rocket science.
-  George planned to take over the earth, sell the planet to the highest bidder, and use the profits to start a goat farm on Neptune.
-  Lana was logical and lovely.

AFTER INTRODUCTORY PHRASES

Prepositional phrases – an introductory prepositional phrase answers one of the following questions about the main clause: How? Where? Which one? What kind? When? To what extent? If the phrase is four or more words, use a comma.

 Along roadsides all across the country, ghosts wander looking for homes.

Appositive phrases – an introductory appositive phrase renames the noun directly after it.

 A time traveler with a grudge and a love of glam metal, Jack kept returning to 1978.




Infinitive phrases – an introductory infinitive phrase starts with an infinitive [to + simple form of a verb].

 To avoid answering his questions, she pretended to be asleep.

AFTER INTRODUCTORY CLAUSES




Introductory clauses are dependent clauses that set the stage for the main part of the sentence, the independent clause.

-  Although Simon proposed, he did not come to the wedding.
-  If Rashia had asked, he would have given his life.
-  Because the war had ended, the soldiers buried their guns.



Introductory clauses start with adverbs such as after, although, as, because, before, if, since, though, until, when, etc.

Absolute phrases – an introductory absolute phrase consists of a noun followed by a word or phrase that describes the noun and modifies an entire clause.

 Their hands and faces bloody, the children were not allowed at the table.



Participial phrases – an introductory participle describes a noun or pronoun in the main clause in terms of its action or state of being. Participles generally end in -ed, -ing or -en.

-  Examining the wound carefully, he decided to use the hack saw.
-  Shaken and haunted, James asked to be given a second chance.

If the participial phrase is essential to the meaning of the sentence, no commas should be used.

AROUND ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

Adjective clauses describe the noun that comes before the clause. They begin with *that, when, where, who, whom, whose, which, or why*. If the adjective clause can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence, place commas on both sides of it.



The president, *who was recently elected*, has no political experience.

SuperStupor, which is the largest bar in town, just closed.



The crematorium *that I liked* recently closed.

AROUND APPOSITIVES

An **appositive** is a word or phrase that describes and renames a noun right next to it. When the appositive is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, set it off with a comma or, if midsentence, two.



Akron Splendif, *the director of the new organ engineering facility*, just received a third kidney.

IN DATES



Commas are used to separate **the day of the week** from **the month** and **the day of the month** from **the year**. When a date appears midsentence, the year is also followed by a comma



The wedding was scheduled for Friday, July 13, 2013.

He noticed that the love letter was dated April 1, 1999.



The storm on November 11, 2011, was considered the beginning of the end. By December 2012 they were gone.

AFTER INTRODUCTORY WORDS



Introductory words act as bridges that help readers transition from one sentence to the next. Introductory words should be followed by a comma.

Common introductory words: yes, however, well, meanwhile, nonetheless, furthermore, therefore, thus, moreover, afterward, later, first, finally, generally, still, yet, next, basically, no, actually, eventually, now, ultimately, etc.

TO SET OFF QUOTATION MARKS IN DIALOGUE

Use commas to separate the words inside quotation marks from the rest of the sentence. If the dialogue tag comes before the quoted material, place the comma after the tag and before the quote. If the dialogue tag comes after the quoted material, place the comma before the closing quotation mark.



"Excuse me," said the boy. "You just cut off my finger."

"Oh! I'm so sorry," I shouted, "I didn't see it there."



WHEN NAMING GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS



Commas are used to separate geographical elements. When a series of geographical elements appears in the middle of a sentence, they are followed by a comma.



His address was 123 Sesame Street, New York, NY 54321.

She left Paris, France, to live in Paris, Texas, at age ten.

WHEN USING NAMES

When directly addressing someone, the person's name should be set off with commas.



John, I want you to come look at this.



Unfortunately, Mary, I've temporarily lost my vision.

WITH THE WORDS YES AND NO

In direct address, use a comma after the words yes and no.



No, that is not what I intended.



Yes, you can pick up the zombie children on Friday.

AROUND INTERRUPTORS

Interrupters interrupt a thought to show emotion or add emphasis. When you use an **interrupter** in the middle of a sentence, place commas on both sides.



Teleportation fees, *you should know*, are projected to fall by thirty percent.



A round trip ticket to Japan will soon be two hundred dollars, *if you can believe it*.