



...a useful punctuation device that separates elements of a sentence into manageable segments.

#### Commas are used:

- To set off introductory clauses, phrases, or words that come before the main clause
  - Examples:

Clauses – While she was eating, she heard the phone ringing.

Phrases – To get good seating, you need to make early reservations. Words – However, we cannot make any promises.

 To set off clauses, phrases, or words in the middle of the sentence that are not essential to its meaning

Examples:

Clauses – The manager, who happens to be Jill's father, resigned on Tuesday.

Phrases – The store, on the other hand, will operate as usual. <u>Words – The employers, though, were vastly disappointed.</u>

#### Commas are used:

 To separate clauses, phrases, or words written in a series Examples:

Clauses – The prosecutor argued his case against the defendant who was at the scene of the crime, who had the motive, and who was driven by vengeance.

Phrases – The player hit the ball, dropped the bat, and ran to first base.

Words – Tina, Jim, and Eddy applied for the same position.

 To connect two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, yet, so)
 Example:

He managed to leave the office on time, but he was late for the party.

- 1. To facilitate an excellent repair job, I recommend Smith & Conners.
- 2. The owner installed new equipment, and he hired new personnel to advise clients.
- 3. The committee selected books notebooks, pens, and paper clips.
- 4. After they made a decision, they began the work immediately.
- 5. Your ideas, in my opinion, should be adopted by all parties involved.

Next, we'll go more in depth about using commas, focusing on sentence introductions, complexity, and series.

#### Introduction

Often at the beginning of a sentence, there is an introduction of some form. Depending on the situation, these introductions may or may not require a comma. There are two types of introductions which require a comma afterwards.

### Introduction

 Whenever there is a phrase with three or more words, you should add a comma. These phrases may begin with prepositions such as when, after, if, because, to; words ending in "ing"; or other phrases which by themselves are not considered complete sentences.

**Ex**.: Once you have completed the assignment, please go and see the teacher.

Sitting before the tree, the cat determined the squirrel was too far away.

### Introduction

- If the phrase has fewer than three words, commas are not required.
   <u>Ex.</u>: To him the idea appeared ridiculous.
- Common introductory words, also, require a comma after them. *However, yes, therefore, accordingly*, etc. are a few examples which fall under this category.
  Ex.: Therefore, we must be alert for changes to the current outcome.

- 1. If the plane does not stop for fuel, will we be able to complete the trip?
- 2. Considering the current trend, it is best to be prepared for the unexpected.
- 3. Yes, there will be a meeting about how professors have been responding to their students recently.
- 4. While this seems trivial, the effects will greatly improve the condition of the students.
- 5. All things being considered, the changes should be in place no later than the end of the semester.
- 6. However ,we must not act too quickly or the results could be disastrous.

# Explanation—Complexity

If you are writing sentences which contain more than one independent clause connected by a coordinating conjunction, a comma is required before the conjunction. The words which qualify under this category are *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *nor*, *so*, *yet*.

**Ex.:** I went to the store, and Dana decided to take a bath.

The barn received no apparent damage immediately following the storm, yet there now appears to be a few broken windows.

 This is not the case, though, if one of the clauses is dependent (cannot stand on its own as a sentence). In this case there should be no comma before the coordinating conjunction.

**Ex.:** Sally bought a new bike but just put it directly in storage without using it.

- 1. We need to make sure that the boat floats properly, for if it does not, there will be major problems once we set sail.
- 2. If the house were a little higher above the lake, or the water a little less unpredictable, then there would be no problem with flooding.
- 3. The cat seems to really enjoy the fish tank, but I'm not so sure if the fish feel the same about a paw constantly coming into their domain.
- 4. In the beginning of the story, the commander was just beginning his daunting task, and the future soldier had yet to be trained.

## Explanation—Series

 Whenever you make a series containing three or more words or phrases, you must separate the words or phrases with commas.

**Ex.:** Even the cows, horses, and deer hate the sound of that baby screaming!

Flowing water, steaming soup, and burning wood all remind me of camping.

You need to be running, walking, or jogging through the desert for an hour.

 If you only have two words or phrases in a series, you only need to add the conjunction.
 Ex.: Both the cat and the dog are swimming in the pool.

Either you or that car must leave.

- 1. Whenever you come over to the house be sure to bring cookies, ice cream, chips, and pop.
- 2. Don't forget about the sandwiches and condiments either.
- 3. Could you make sure that someone is in charge of bringing the decorations, inviting the guests, and buying the plates and silverware?
- 4. What about keeping the secret from the birthday girls and boy?
- 5. Should Sally, Joey, or Dan be put in charge of keeping them busy while we decorate?