

COMMA USAGE

USE A COMMA BEFORE COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Coordinating conjunctions are **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**. (This is a complete list.)

*A checking account will save you time in paying bills, **and** it will give you definite proof that payments have been made.*

*I was sorry to hear this, **for** I especially wanted Mr. Brown to see the plan.*

NOTE: Do not place a comma before the conjunction in a compound predicate:

We used the adding machine for ten days and returned it to you in good condition.

USE A COMMA TO SET OFF INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

- **Introductory Dependent Clauses:** These clauses are usually introduced by such subordinate conjunctions as **if, although, since, while, because, when**. (This is not a complete list.)

***Although we did not make a large profit,** we made many friends.*

***When you plan your next trip,** stop at any one of our downtown stores.*

NOTE: When the main clause precedes the dependent clause, no comma is needed:

*She plans to secure a stenographic position **if she graduates in June.***

*I intend to paint my house this spring **although I may regret it.***

*This new system has been adopted for the purpose of reducing our expenses **so that we can give you the maximum service at the lowest possible cost.***

- **Introductory Phrases before Independent Clauses:**

***To succeed in any occupation,** one must secure the necessary qualifications.*

***Acting on the advice of Mr. Long,** he cancelled the order.*

***Having finished most of her work,** she went to lunch.*

***In view of this,** we thought you would be interested in a completed course.*

***From these figures,** you can easily determine the one responsible for the loss.*

- **Introductory Words and Transitional Expressions:**

***Certainly,** the order should have been processed early last week.*

***Well,** our new supply certainly should be here in another week or so.*

***My,** but sales are climbing at a rapid rate.*

***On the other hand,** a more stringent policy might produce better results.*

***Furthermore,** the subscriptions you obtain will be a source of additional profit.*

USE A COMMA TO SET OFF INTERRUPTERS

- **Transitions and Parenthetical Words, Phrases, and Clauses:**

*You must, **therefore,** act quickly if you wish to take advantage of this price.*

*It may be, **of course,** that you prefer the more expensive material.*

*We have all types of boxes, **for example,** corrugated or plastic.*

*We hope, **Mr. Long,** that we may have the pleasure of serving you soon.*

***Ms. Thompson,** your suggestion is an excellent one.*

- **Nonessential (Nonrestrictive Relative) Clauses:**

*Our company, **which has been in business since 1908,** has made little paper of this type.*

*This pad, **which has your name embossed in gold,** will be sent free of charge.*

*My sister, **who listens well**, smiled knowingly.*

- **Appositives:** An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that modifies another noun or noun phrase.

*An office friend, **Mr. Ralph Linder**, is purchasing a new car this spring.*

*Your task is simplified if you have a copy of our book, **Improved Reading**.*

- **Contrasted Expressions:**

*It was the sporting goods, **not the hardware**, that were reduced in price.*

*You should use an electric calculator, **not a hand-driven one**.*

*This book tells you, **among other things**, that it will make an effective advertising medium.*

*You will find, **I am sure**, that it will make an effective advertising medium.*

USE COMMAS TO SET OFF WORDS, PHRASES, OR SHORT CLAUSES IN A SERIES

*This filter will remove **dust, dirt, and grime** from the oil.*

*The woman who **rushes in, buys something, and rushes out** is cheating herself.*

NOTE: Addresses and dates in a sentence are also treated as a series:

*Please write our local dealer, **The Office Supply Company, 664 W. Main Street, Waco, Texas**.*

*You will find it a pleasure to deal with our bank, which was established in **April 1902**, and which has been serving the public ever since.*

NOTE: When writing with “such as,” a comma is used before it but not after it if it introduces a nonrestrictive appositive. If it introduces a restrictive appositive, no punctuation is used.

*Office supplies, **such as stationary, carbon paper, and pencils**, afford a good opportunity for economy.*

*Mistakes **such as this** can lead to serious consequences.*

USE A COMMA TO INTRODUCE AN INFORMAL QUOTATION

*Why not take a minute and write us a note saying, “**Send us a complete list of samples and prices?**”*

*“**Get production started,**” said Mr. Brown, “**before we lose that order.**”*

NOTE: When the quotation is long or formal, a colon may be used.

USE A COMMA IN THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL CASES

- **To Indicate Omission of a Word or Words:**

In January, the mailing department mailed 784 packages; in February, 723; and in March, 814.

- **To Set off a Declarative Statement from a Short Question Relating To It:**

Mr. Arnold gave my message to Mr. Ward, didn't he?

- **To Separate Two Identical Words or Two Unrelated Numbers:**

I told you, you would never regret your decision.

In 1974, 783 new members were added to the association.

- **To Set off Explanatory Clauses:**

*We must insist on our usual standard of quality; that is, **no battery can be sold unless it meets the most rigid inspection**.*

- **TO SET OFF THOUSANDS IN FIGURES CONTAINING FOUR DIGITS OR MORE, except in serial numbers, such as page, policy, telephone and year numbers:**

| | | | |
|-----------|---------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1,726 | 729,500 | 93,000,000 | 770-555-1234 |
| page 1136 | The year 2000 | 3746 N. Avenue | Policy no. 6206119 |