|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Basic Rules of the Comma | |
| Addresses & Geographical Items | Addresses and geographical items that contain two or more elements should use commas to set off the second and following elements.  *My sister from Billings, Montana, called yesterday.* |
| Appositives | Set off appositives with commas. *Geoff Watkins, my supervisor, will be my mentor.* No commas before essential information. *The student Ted Cox won the award.* |
| Clarity | Use commas to separate repeated words for emphasis or repeated words that may be misread if not separated.  *If you go, go now! Although bored, employees did respond.* |
| Contrasting Statements | Commas are used to set off contrasting or opposing expressions.  *We chose HyVee, not Palmer’s Deli, to cater our luncheon.*  *The more I go to the gym, the stronger I feel. The less I eat, the more tired I am.* |
| Dates & Time Zones | Dates with two or more elements are set off with commas. Commas set off time zones. *The original store opened on January 10, 2011, in Omaha, Nebraska.  We will open our new business at 7:00 a.m., CST*. |
| Degrees and Abbreviations | Personal titles, professional titles, & professional designations (except for Jr. and Sr.) are set off by commas.  *Anthony Doneli, PhD, explained how to use a Web page for hiring employees.* |
| Direct Address | Set off direct addresses in sentences. *I believe, Sue, that the conference will be held in Building 8. I regret, sir, that you were not notified of the change*. |
| Independent Adjectives | Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives that modify a noun if the adjectives can be switched around and the sentence remains clear.  *My dog is a small, brown Silky Terrier.* |
| Independent Clauses  (fanboys) | When a coordinating conjunction joins two independent clauses, add a comma before the conjunction. *She was late for class, but she still finished the exam.* |
| Introductory Dependent Clauses | Add a comma after a dependent clause followed by an independent clause.  *When you finish painting the bedroom, please clean all of the brushes.* |
| Introductory Verbal Phrases | Add a comma after an introductory verbal phrase. *Sitting in the car, we looked at the breathtaking mountains. Skilled with computers, Tonya was quickly hired.* |
| Nonessential Clauses | Use commas to set off clauses that are not essential to the sentence.  *Tom Moorehead, who was the guest speaker, is from Des Moines.* |
| Numerals | Numbers of four or more digits require commas – 12,000 and 100,000.  Adjacent numbers require a comma. *In 2018, 35,000 students enrolled in courses.* |
| Omitted Words | When omitted words are understood, use a comma to show the omission.  *Last semester I took five classes; this semester, four classes*. |
| Parenthetical Expressions  (Interrupters) | Set off interrupters in sentences with commas – of course, on the other hand, for example, by the way, in my opinion, in fact.  *March, in my opinion, is the best month to go skiing. By the way, I enrolled in the class.* |
| Introductory Prepositional Phrases | A sentence that begins with a prepositional phrase should be followed by a comma.  *On a long holiday weekend, it’s not convenient to call a plumber to fix a leak.* |
| Series | *Only on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are discounts being offered.*  *Sam is the supervisor, Sheri is the office manager, and Bob is the owner.* |
| Short Quotations | Examples of commas used with quotations: *“The first snowfall,” said Betty, “is usually in December.” Amber said, “I love winter.”* |
| Terminal Dependent Clauses | Do not add a comma when a dependent clause follows an independent clause.  *Please clean all of the brushes when you finish painting.*  Add a comma to terminal clauses that are nonessential or afterthoughts that don’t answer *When? Why? or How?*  *The test we took today was easy, although I didn’t do well.* |

Introductory Dependent Clause Rule (Subordinating Conjunctions)

*If the sentence begins with a subordinating conjunction, you will use a comma to separate the dependent clause from the independent clause.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| after | Because | Provided | until |
| although | Before | Since | when |
| as | even though | so that | where |
| as if | If | That | whether |
| as though | in order that | Unless | while |

Conjunctive Adverbs OR Parenthetical Expressions

*If the conjunctive adverb is in between two sentences, you need a semicolon before it and a comma after it (unless it’s one syllable).*

*If a parenthetical expression is within one sentence, you need a comma before and after it.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| accordingly | however | nevertheless |
| also | in fact | on the contrary |
| anyway | in other words | on the other hand |
| consequently | in the meantime | otherwise |
| for example | indeed | that is |
| for instance | likewise | then |
| furthermore | moreover | therefore |
| hence | namely | thus |

Miscellaneous Rules

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Adverb *too* rule |  |
| One word appositive |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |