



AP STYLE

COMMAS

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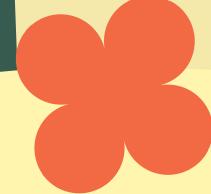
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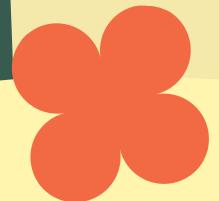
Test Your Knowledge



Introduction

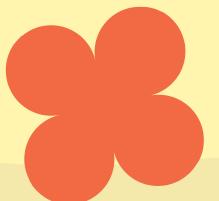
In the world of professional writing and communications, clarity and precision are everything. One tool that ensures our writing is polished, professional, and easy to read is punctuation—and today, we're focusing on the AP Style comma.





Introduction

The AP Stylebook, commonly used in journalism, public relations, and social media, has its own set of rules for commas that differ from what we may have learned in traditional grammar classes. Whether you're crafting headlines, drafting social media posts, or editing press releases, understanding these guidelines is key to creating content that flows smoothly and aligns with industry standards.



Comma Rules

LESSON 1

Ditching the Oxford Comma



LESSON 2

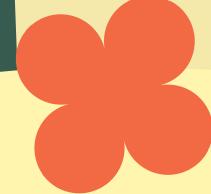
Essential vs. Nonessential Clauses



LESSON 3

Introductory Elements





The Oxford Comma

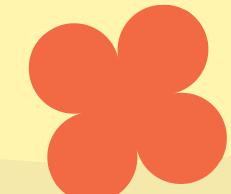
In AP Style, do not use a comma before the final item in a simple series unless it's absolutely necessary for clarity.

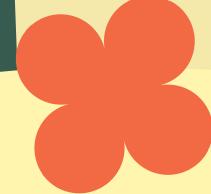
Example:

AP Style: The flag is red, white and blue.

Incorrect (Oxford comma): The flag is red, white, and blue.

This rule is often overlooked or ignored due to prior grammar rules learned, however, AP Style rarely uses the Oxford Comma unless necessary for clarification.



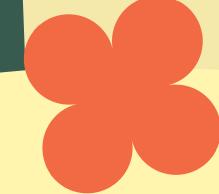


The Oxford Comma

For example, the Oxford Comma is used to avoid confusion.

Example for clarity:

- I admire my parents, Oprah Winfrey, and Beyoncé. (Here, the comma clarifies the list; without it, the sentence could imply that Oprah and Beyoncé are the parents!)



Essential Clauses

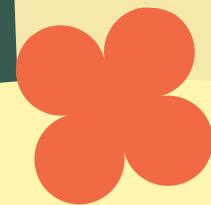
Essential Clauses

- **Definition:** These clauses provide information that is necessary to the meaning of the sentence. Without the clause, the sentence would lose important context or meaning.

Example:

- Students who study regularly perform better on exams.
 - (The clause "who study regularly" is essential because it specifies which students perform better.)



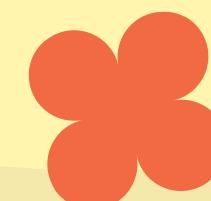


Nonessential Clauses

- **Definition:** These clauses add extra information that is not critical to the sentence's meaning. The sentence would still make sense if the clause were removed.

Example:

- My professor, who has a Ph.D. in journalism, gave us great advice.
 - (The clause "who has a Ph.D. in journalism" is nonessential because it adds extra detail but isn't necessary to identify the professor.)

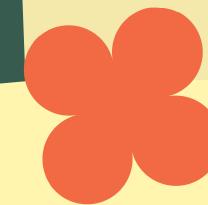


Comma Rules for Essential Clauses

- **Rule:** Do not use commas around essential clauses.
- **Why?** These clauses provide critical information that identifies or specifies something in the sentence. Without them, the meaning of the sentence would change.

Example:

- The book that I borrowed from the library is due tomorrow.
 - “that I borrowed from the library” is essential because it identifies which book is due. Without it, the sentence would lack context.



Commas with Introductory Elements

- **Rule:** Use a comma after introductory words, phrases, or clauses to separate them from the main sentence.
- **Examples:**
- **Single Word:** However, we need to leave.
- **Phrase:** After the meeting, we discussed the results.
- **Clause:** Because it was late, we decided to go home.
- **Exception:** For short phrases, the comma is optional if the meaning is clear.
- **Example:** At noon, we left.



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AP Style Commas