

# 6 Reasons to Use a Comma

## Commas that Join...

### 1. Independent Clauses into a Compound Sentence

Put a comma before a conjunction [*and, but, for, so, or, yet*] **only** if each side of the sentence could stand by itself as a complete sentence.

- ❖ Most people think the tomato is a vegetable, but it is actually a fruit.

Do **not** use a comma if either side of the sentence is not capable of being a complete sentence on its own.

- ❖ The director worked late into the night but didn't come in the next day.

## Commas that Separate...

### 2. Introductory Words or Phrases

Use a comma after an introductory word or phrase that comes before the main clause of the sentence (the subject and predicate).

- ❖ Typically, cats have a strict hygiene regiment.
- ❖ Even with the fresh coat of paint, the house looked drab.
- ❖ When I came home to a clean house, I was astonished.
- ❖ Mr. Johnson, I've been to this office before.
- ❖ Oh, I was exhausted.

### 3. Asides

Use a comma to separate an aside that is thrown into middle of a sentence as long as they interrupt the main clause and are not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

- ❖ Jasmine, who won an award last year, was the first student to get an internship.
- ❖ This question, I'm sure we would all agree, was extremely difficult to answer.
- ❖ The librarian, who has brown hair, is very helpful. [non-essential clause]

*But not in...*

- ❖ The librarian who has brown hair is very helpful. [essential clause – in this case, we need to know her hair color]

### 4. Items in a List/Series

When listing 3 or more things (words, phrases, or clauses), put a comma after all but the last one.

- ❖ I brought a sandwich, an apple, and a cookie.
- ❖ The guest speaker spoke about mental health issues, demonstrated a strategy for counseling patients, and led in a discussion about medical ethics.
- ❖ The tent had a leak, the food had gone bad, and our clothes were soaked.

When listing 2 or more coordinate adjectives (adjectives that could be switched around), put a comma in between them.

- ❖ It was a dim, soggy day.

### 5. A Quote from the Rest of the Sentence

- ❖ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

### 6. Addresses, Place names, Dates

- ❖ Send correspondence to Bowie State University, 14000 Jericho Park Rd., Bowie, MD 20715.
- ❖ The delegates met in Annapolis, Maryland.
- ❖ The law was passed on June 3, 1958.

*If it's not one of the scenarios above, it does **not** need a comma.*



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