

## The Comma

1. Use a comma between two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (remember FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*). The comma precedes the conjunction.

Starting an internship requires humility and perseverance, and an intern's work often goes unacknowledged.

Medicine is a rewarding career, but many physicians experience burnout.

In the following examples, removing *she* (a subject) after *and* turns the independent clause into a **compound predicate** for which no comma is required.

<b>Correct</b>	Darla scratched the cat's head, and <u>she rubbed its belly</u> .
<b>Correct</b>	Darla scratched the cat's head and <b>rubbed its belly</b> .
<b>Incorrect</b>	Darla scratched the cat's head, and rubbed its belly.

2. Use a comma to introduce a clause, phrase, or word before the main idea.

i. Dependent clause before independent clause:

If the food system prioritized the environment and the wellbeing of farm workers, our grocery stores would look very different.

ii. Introductory phrase:

In times of hardship, members of tight-knit communities have always looked after one another.

After peer review, the research was rejected by several prominent academic journals.

iii. Conjunctive adverb at the start of the sentence:

Unfortunately, the dearth of evidence prevented the case from moving forward.

Consequently, citizens will turn to alternative news outlets for unbiased reporting.

3. Use commas around words, phrases, or non-restrictive clauses that interrupt a sentence.

A challenge of modern medicine, undoubtedly, is finding a cure for cancer.

Marcel Proust, a French novelist, is considered by critics and writers to be one of the most influential authors of the 20th century.

Bishop's students, who come from near and far, are satisfied with their university experience.

### NO COMMAS WITH RESTRICTIVE CLAUSES!

A restrictive clause specifies the noun or noun phrase and provides necessary information about the noun in the sentence.

The boy who knocked at the door was collecting donations. (restrictive clause)

4. Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.

The stray cat hides under the porch, among the ferns, and inside the storage shed.

High blood triglyceride levels tax the liver, lead to heart disease, and may decrease life span.

"Some men are born mediocre, some men achieve mediocrity, and some men have mediocrity thrust upon them." (Novelist Joseph Heller)

5. Use commas to separate adjectives ONLY IF you can add *and* between the adjectives and reverse the order of the adjectives. See [www.grammarly.com/blog/adjective-order/](http://www.grammarly.com/blog/adjective-order/)

It was a long, arduous journey. (same as "It was a long and arduous journey")

There was a long blue line on the wall. (cannot say "long and blue line on the wall")

6. Use commas with direct quotations. See BU Writing Centre *Punctuation Use with Quotations* handout.

Elbert Hubbard stated, "To avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing, be nothing."

"Never reward bad behaviour," cautions Dr. Phil.

7. Use commas when stating a date.

John Lennon was born on Wednesday, October 9, 1949, and died on Monday, December 8, 1980.

References:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/commas/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/commas/index.html)

