

The Comma

- 1) If two or more ideas are joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so), put a comma before the conjunction.

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

Physical activity has been proven to lower the risk of chronic disease, but a person shouldn't overdo it.

Non-rabid wolves live away from people and have developed a fear of humans.

*Non-rabid wolves live away from people, and they have developed a fear of humans.

*When you add *they* after the *and*, the second half becomes an independent clause, and a comma is then required.

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

Dependent clause before independent clause:

Because of the growing national debt, future generations might not enjoy government pensions.

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

Introductory phrase:

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

As a result, the research was rejected by several prominent scholarly journals.

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 clauses that interrupt a sentence.

One of the most difficult challenges of modern medicine, as our guest speaker explained, is finding a cure for dementia.

The education system, quite frankly, is not equipping students with the necessary skills to succeed in the job market.

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

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

BUT

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.

Elevated blood triglyceride levels tax the liver, may lead to heart disease, and 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 1) add *and* between the adjectives and 2) reverse the order of the adjectives.

It was a long, arduous journey. (= It was a long AND arduous journey.)

There was a long blue line on the wall.

6) Use a comma with direct quotations.

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

"I don't mind if I have to sit on the floor at school. All I want is education, and I'm afraid of no one," said Malala.

7) Use a comma when stating a date.

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