

COMMA RULES

1. Use commas to separate words, phrases, or clauses in a **list or series**. However, if all the items in the list are connected by “or,” “nor,” or “and,” then no commas are needed.
A worthwhile philosophy includes honesty, industry, and kindness.
2. Use a comma to set off **introductory words, phrases, and clauses** from the sentence.
After the storm was over, we went home.
Having rung the bell loudly, the sentry fled.
In 1516, soldiers were hired as mercenaries.
In the room we found no signs of life.
Yes, I will be there.
3. Use commas to set off **interrupting words, phrases, and clauses**.
Jonathan will, in fact, serve on the committee. No one else I know, however, will volunteer. Jane, who is my best friend, has asked me to be a bridesmaid.
4. Use a comma with a conjunction (and, but, or, so, for, yet) to make a **compound sentence**.
She helped me with my homework, and then she stayed for dinner.
She helped me with my homework and then stayed for dinner. (not two sentences, so no comma)
5. Use commas to set off **appositives** (one-word appositives are often not set off).
Mr. Jay, our coach, taught at Wilmont, a boy's school. (two appositives)
The year 1812 found America in another war. (comma not needed)
6. Use commas in **addresses and dates**. Always put a comma between the city and state; never put a comma between the state and zip code.
Hal lives at 222 Joy Street, Dayton, Ohio 45402. He was born on December 22, 1967. She was born in May 1984. (comma not needed without the day)
7. Use commas with **direct quotations**. For example:
“I have to study for the math test,” my sister complained. I responded, “Quit whining.” “I wish,” commented Grace, “that you wouldn’t call me so early in the morning.”
8. Use commas with words of **direct address**. In direct address, someone is being spoken to directly.
Mary, come over here. I wish, Mary, that you would come over later. Are you ready, Greg?
9. Use a comma to set off **contrasting expressions** or to show **emphasis**.
The book was Frank’s, not Hal’s. That was a great meal, especially the dessert.