

Comma Rules

Commas can be used many ways:

FANBOYS: FANBOYS is an acronym for all seven coordinating conjunctions (ex. For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So). A comma is used when two independent clauses (complete sentences) are joined with a coordinating conjunction. A **comma** is always required **before** conjunctions.

TRANSITION: A comma can be used after a transitional word or phrase. Some examples of transitional words and phrases are; **consequently, therefore, accordingly, as a result, because, for this reason, hence, thus, furthermore, in addition, moreover, first, second, third, finally, again, also, and, besides, further, in the first place, last, likewise, next, then, too.**

LIST: A comma can be used to separate three or more individual items to create a list.

SUBORDINATE/DEPENDENT CLAUSE: A comma can be used when a complex sentence starts with a subordinate or dependent clause (Ex. Even though the broccoli was covered in cheese, Emily ate it).

EXTRA INFORMATION: Commas can be used to separate extra information from the main sentence (Ex. She drove, **without wearing a seat belt**, as fast as she could).

FANBOYS Rule (Coordinating Conjunctions)

A comma is needed if the coordinating conjunction is joining two independent clauses, also known as complete sentences.

Example:

- Timmy went to the mall, **and** he bought new shoes.
**TIP: Cover up the conjunction to help see if both sides are complete sentences. In other words, if they are not two complete sentences, do not use a comma.*
- **FANBOYS:** (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So).
 - **For:** Students have to read their textbooks, **for** each class is based on theories students need to learn.
 - **And:** Earning a college degree requires a lot of dedication, **and** it costs a lot of money.
 - **Nor:** Employers do not want employees who cannot solve problems, **nor** do they want workers who are lazy.
 - **But:** Going to school while working at a job is difficult, **but** the rewards will pay off later.

FANBOYS Rule (CONTINUED)

- **Or:** Students can either buy their textbook, or they can rent it from a book rental service.
- **Yet:** Learning can be very exciting and invigorating, yet it can also be exhausting.
- **So:** Janet is a nurse, so she works long hours.

Transitions

A comma can be used after a transitional word or phrase:

Transitions can join sentences.

Example:

- Tim went to the mall; then, he saw a movie.

Transitions can start sentences.

Example:

- Tim went to the mall. Then, he saw a movie.

Example:

1. Tim went to the mall; then, he saw a movie.
2. Tim went to the mall. Then, he saw a movie.

List

Commas are used to separate three or more items in a list.

Example:

- My favorite ice-cream floats are Rocky Road, Vanilla, and Cookies and Cream ice cream.

Sentences with two items do not need commas.

Example:

- I need to eat and exercise.

Subordinate/Dependent Clause

Use a comma when a complex sentence starts with a subordinate/dependent clause.

Subordinate clause, complete sentence.

- Because Tom needed new shoes, he went to the mall.
(subordinate/dependent clause), (complete sentence).

If the subordinate/dependent clause comes after the independent clause, then no comma is needed.

- Tom went to the store because he needed new shoes.

**Note: There are many subordinating words that can turn a sentence into a dependent clause.*

Example of subordinating words:

- | | | |
|------------|---------------|--------------|
| • Before | • Because | • While |
| • After | 0000 | • When |
| • Wherever | • Since | • As soon as |
| • As | • While | • Once |
| • If | • Even though | • Unless |
| • Although | • Until | • Despite |
| | • Whether | • Because |

Additional Uses for Commas

Use commas to separate **additional information** from the main sentence. For example:

1. The beginning of a sentence:
 - **Wow**, Susan kicked the ball.
2. The middle of a sentence:
 - Susan, **with the glasses**, kicked the ball.
3. The end of sentence:
 - Susan kicked the soccer ball, **winning the game**.
4. All three at once:
 - **Wow**, Susan, **with the glasses**, kicked the ball, **winning the game**.
5. Using a comma with a contradictory phrase:
 - I like Grizzly bears, **not** Panda bears.