



Quick Comma Rules

1. Use commas to separate items in a series.

Any time you are listing three or more items, separate each item in the series with a comma.

Ex. I need to buy milk, eggs, and bread.

Ex. Today I will go to work, go to the grocery store, and take my dog to the park.

2. Use commas and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) to join two sentences together.

Ex. I went to the grocery store today, **but** I forgot to buy milk.

3. Use commas between two or more adjectives that describe the same noun.

Ex. The dark, ominous clouds filled the sky.

A general rule of thumb is that if you can put the word “and” between the adjectives, you should use a comma. The dark **and** ominous clouds filled the sky.

4. Use a comma after an introductory word or phrase.

Ex. Because I am baking a cake, I need to buy eggs and milk from the store.

Ex. Luckily, I will have time to go to the store tomorrow.

5. Use commas to set off a non-essential clause in a sentence.

A non-essential clause is a phrase that gives extra information; it is not needed to maintain the original meaning of the sentence.

Ex. My brother, who lives in Kansas City, will be visiting this weekend.

(You do not need to know where my brother lives to know that he will be visiting this weekend.)

A general rule of thumb is that if the phrase is necessary to maintain the meaning of your sentence, you do not need commas around the phrase, but if the phrase is not needed in your sentence, the phrase should be set off by commas.

6. Use a comma when directly addressing someone.

Ex. Mary, do you want to go to the movies with me?

Ex. I think, Mary, that we should go to the movies tonight.

7. Use commas to set off direct quotations.

Ex. Jane said, “I have learned so much about commas today.”

8. Use commas in dates, titles, numbers, and addresses.

Ex. On Friday, September 6, I learned some new rules for commas.

Ex. Mary Smith, MD, is my neighbor.

Ex. The address for East Central College is 1964 Prairie Dell Road, Union, MO 63084.

