

Common Comma Rules



Use Commas...

1. **After introductory clauses, phrases, and words** to separate them from main part of sentence.
 - *After we went shopping, I was really tired.*
 - *On the long drive home, Mary quickly fell asleep.*
 - *However, we both woke up for a delicious homemade dinner.*
2. **Before coordinating conjunctions that join two complete sentences.** There are only seven coordinating conjunctions known as FANBOYS → for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.
 - *We went shopping, and we later went to dinner.*
 - *Susan wanted to be a writer, so she took classes at the local college.*
 - *The kids played baseball for two hours, but they lost the ball over the fence.*
3. **Between all items in a list**, including before the word "and" and the last item listed.
 - *I love the colors blue, red, and yellow.*
 - *Mary went to the store, bought some fruit, and made fruit salad.*
 - *Sonny found lights in the attic, under the bed, and outside the shed.*
4. **To introduce quotations.**
 - *Smith states, "Ohio is a great state to attend college."*
 - *According to Jones, "OSU's marching band is the best in the country."*



Do NOT Use Commas...

1. **Before the word "and" or "but" unless used to join two complete sentences.** Do not use comma unless what appears after "and" or "but" can stand alone as a full sentence.
 - *We went shopping (no comma) and ate dinner.*
 - *Susan wanted to be a writer (no comma) and took classes at the local college.*
 - *The kids played baseball for two hours (no comma) but lost the ball over the fence.*
 - *All girls from the class (no comma) and their adoring fathers attended the dance.*
2. **Between subjects and verbs.**
 - *The kind clerk who loves helping customers (no comma) assisted the elderly woman.*
 - *Apples, pears, kiwi, and other fruit that grows on trees (no comma) tastes wonderful.*
3. **Before the word "because" or "that" in essential phrases/clauses.**
 - *Louise went to the grocery store (no comma) because she was quite hungry.*
 - *Joe loves to catch Lake Erie fish (no comma) that he can cook on the grill.*



Remember: "If in doubt, leave them out." It is much better to miss a comma than to put too many in, breaking up the flow of your writing!