COMMAS

The comma separates the structural elements of a sentence into manageable segments.

- **Use a comma to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses written in a series.** (A comma is necessary before the last ‘and.’)
  Example: The Constitution establishes the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government.

- **Use a comma after transition words and phrases that begin a sentence: however, therefore, on the other hand, for example, etc.**
  Example: Today is a national holiday. *Consequently*, most stores are closed. (word)
  Today is a national holiday. *As a result*, most stores are closed. (phrase)

- **Use a pair of commas in the middle of a sentence to set off transition words and phrases as well as clauses that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence.**
  I appreciate your hard work. In this case, *however*, you seem to have over-exerted yourself. (word)
  This restaurant has an exciting atmosphere. The food, *on the other hand*, is rather bland. (phrase)
  Next Tuesday, *which happens to be my birthday*, is the only day I can meet. (clause)

- **Use a comma to separate independent clauses when they are joined by any of these seven coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so [FAN BOYS].**
  Example: The game was over, *but the crowd refused to leave.*

- **Use a comma after a dependent clause when it comes before the independent clause.**
  Example: *While I was eating,* the cat scratched at the door.
  *Because I was late,* I had to sit in the back.

  **NOTE:** Do not use a comma if the order is reversed (the independent clause comes before the dependent clause), except for cases of extreme contrast. A dependent clause provides additional information about the independent clause and establishes the relationship of this information to the independent clause. The most common subordinating conjunctions are: after, although, as, as if, because, before, even though, if, since, so that, than, that, though, unless, until, when, where, whether, and while.

  **Examples:** *She was late for class because her alarm clock was broken.*
  *She was still quite upset, although she had won the Oscar.* (extreme contrast)

- **Use a comma to set off all geographical names, items in dates (except the month and day), addresses (except the street number and name), and titles in names.**
  **Examples:** Birmingham, Alabama, gets its name from Birmingham, England.
  Rachel B. Lake, MD, will be the principal speaker.
- Use a comma to shift between the main discourse and a quotation.
  
  **Example:** John said without emotion, "I'll see you tomorrow."

- Use a comma wherever necessary to prevent possible confusion or misreading.
  
  **Example:** To George, Harrison had been a sort of idol.

For more information, refer to the following links:

- **Blue** links offer lessons and information.
- **Green** links provide practice exercises.

  [http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/punct/comma.html](http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/punct/comma.html)
  Detailed lessons.

  [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_overvw.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_overvw.html)
  Overview of commas; information on other areas of punctuation.

  [http://www.chompchomp.com/exercises.htm#Commas](http://www.chompchomp.com/exercises.htm#Commas)
  Lesson and practices. Silly cyber prizes. **Adobe required.**

  [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_comma.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_comma.html)
  Comma lesson and several detailed practices in PowerPoint.