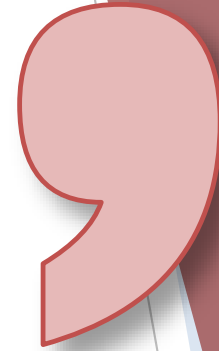


# Simply, COMMAS

# What *IS* a comma?

- ▶ A comma is a punctuation mark indicating a pause between parts of a sentence. It is also used to separate items in a list and to make the place of thousands in a large numeral.
- ▶ Commas help clarify meaning for readers.

*Study the following slides to learn the most common comma rules. Work to master these rules so that you have “comma sense.”*



## Rule 1:

Use a comma between items that are listed in a series that contains three or more words or clauses.

▶ *Courses I am taking this semester include Composition I, Art Appreciation, and Introduction to Sociology.*

▶ *Notice the placement of the commas.*

## Rule 2:

In dialogue, use a comma to set off the words of the speaker from the rest of the sentence.

- ▶ *“Texarkana College offers a quality education with one of the lowest tuition costs per credit hour at a Texas community college,” said TC President James Henry Russell.*
- ▶ *TC President James Henry Russell said, “Texarkana College offers a quality education with one of the lowest tuition costs per credit hour at a Texas community college.”*
  - ▶ *Notice the placement of the commas.*

## Rule 3:

When you write out the month, day, and year, a comma goes between the month and year and after the year.

- ▶ *We are leaving for a Grand Tour of Italy on March 3, 2016, with the Texarkana College Road Scholars.*
  - ▶ *Notice the placement of the commas.*

## Rule 4:

For names, commas are used to designate a professional title or family designation.

- ▶ *Tonja Mackey, Ph.D., is in charge of media services at the Texarkana College Palmer Memorial Library.*
  - ▶ *Notice the placement of the commas.*

## Rule 5:

Use a comma after introductory phrases.

- ▶ *Running toward the Social Science building, the panicked student realized he would be late for class again.*
  - ▶ *Notice the placement of the comma.*

## Rule 6:

Use a comma after a subordinate/dependent clause when it begins a sentence.

Subordinate/dependent clauses begin with words such as *if, because, after, when as, while, since, even though, although, before, and whenever.*

▶ *“Because she consistently attended class and conscientiously completed all of her assignments, the hard-working student earned an A in Organic Chemistry.*

▶ *Notice the placement of the comma.*



## Rule 7:

### Use a comma to set off nonrestrictive appositives.

An appositive is an explanatory word or phrase that identifies or renames a preceding noun or pronoun.

- ▶ *Albert Einstein, the famous mathematician and physicist, developed the theory of relativity.*
  - ▶ *Notice the placement of the commas.*

## Rule 8:

Use a comma followed by one of the FANBOYS conjunctions to join independent clauses.

***For And Nor But Or Yet So***

*Remember, an independent clause is a complete sentence.*

- ▶ *“It was difficult working forty hours a week and attending classes at night, but Dakota was determined to earn his degree.*
- ▶ *Notice the placement of the comma.*

## Rule 9:

Use commas to separate adjectives that *equally* modify the same noun.

To determine whether the adjectives in a sentence modify a noun *equally*, use these two tests:

1. Reverse the order of the adjectives; if the sentence is clear, the adjectives modify equally.
  2. Insert *and* between the adjectives; if the sentence reads well, use a comma when *and* is omitted.
- ▶ *A good diet is one that includes lots of high-protein, low-fat foods.*
    - ▶ *Notice the placement of the comma.*

## Rule 10:

Use a comma to set off a word, phrase, or clause that interrupts the movement of a sentence.

Such expressions usually can be identified by the following tests:

1. They may be omitted without changing the meaning of the sentence.
2. They may be placed nearly anywhere in the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence.

- ▶ *Nick, as a general rule, always comes to class ready for a pop quiz.*
  - ▶ *Notice the placement of the commas.*

## Rule 11:

Use a comma to separate a series of numbers to distinguish hundreds, thousands, millions, and so on.

▶ 25,000

▶ 973, 240

▶ 18,620,197

▶ *Notice the placement of the commas.*

# Avoid Overusing Commas

- ▶ The commas below are used **incorrectly**. **DO NOT** use a comma between the subject and its verb or the verb and its object.
  - ▶ Current periodicals on the subject of psychology, are available at nearly all bookstores.
  - ▶ I think she should read, *Psychology Today*.
    - ▶ *Notice the incorrect placement of the commas. Neither one of the two sentences above should contain a comma.*

# *Avoid Overusing Commas*

The comma in the sentence below is used **incorrectly**. **DO NOT** use a comma before an indirect quotation.

- ▶ My roommate said, that she does not understand the notes I took.
  - ▶ *Notice the incorrect placement of the comma. The sentence above should not contain a comma.*

# *Avoid Overusing Commas*

The comma in the sentence below is used **incorrectly**. **DO NOT** use a comma before an indirect quotation.

- ▶ My roommate said, that she does not understand the notes I took.
  - ▶ *Notice the incorrect placement of the comma. The sentence above should not contain a comma.*



# “Comma Sense”

Don't let these comma rules make you feel overwhelmed. By being able to identify when you should use a comma, and when you shouldn't, you are advancing yourself as a writer. Remember, practice is key.

- ▶ Learn these comma rules, so you can avoid comma splices!
- ▶ *Once you think you have the rules down, take the quiz posted here.*