

Commas



Commas are not used to make a pause in a sentence. There is always a reason for using a comma. Commas can be used to separate words or groups of words in a sentence in order to make the meaning clear. Commas are the most common punctuation mark, but you have to be careful how you use them.

When to use a comma	Example
Add a comma between the two adjectives in a 2a phrase.	He looked into her mysterious, blue eyes. warm, kind man
Add commas to separate items in a long or short list. Remember to use 'and' or 'or' to separate the last two.	She stopped, stared and ran. Sam scares the cat, teases the dog, annoys his sister and irritates the neighbours.
Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) to join main clauses in a compound sentence.	He loves horses, but he dislikes dogs. The weather was beautiful, so they went outside to play.
Use a comma to separate a subordinate clause from a main clause in a complex sentence. Only use a comma if the subordinate clause comes first.	Although my cousin invited me, I chose not to go to the party. When he was younger, Mike had many dogs.
Use a comma after a fronted adverbial phrase at the beginning of a sentence. These tell you where, when, how or how often something happens.	Before the sun came up, he ate his breakfast. Under the clock, he stood and waited.
Use commas to separate extra information in a sentence. The sentence should still make sense when the extra information is removed.	Mrs Smith, our teacher, will show you around. The stadium, built in 1967, was small but comfortable.
In direct speech, you must have a comma before the last inverted comma, unless it is replaced by ! or ? Where the reporting clause comes first, use a comma to introduce speech.	"You look just like me," Sarah muttered. John asked, "Why are you here?"
In direct speech, add a comma when you are talking to someone and you say their name or title.	"Don't forget your homework, Katie, " reminded Mum. " Edward, will you please tidy your room?" asked Dad.
Use a comma before a question tag.	This is safe, isn't it? We won't get into trouble, will we?
Use a comma, of course, before and after an expression that interrupts the sentence flow.	I felt, moreover, that he was being totally unreasonable. He was, without a doubt, just as talented.
Use a comma to ensure that the reader understands exactly what you mean.	We ate chocolate, jelly and cake. We ate chocolate jelly and cake.