

COMMAS IN ENGLISH – TENDENCIES

- A. to signal a pause when reading
Sip a long cocktail as the sun goes down, and relax.
- B. listing 3 and more items
He visited her almost every day, bringing wine, glasses, fish and chips.
- C. before *and* when combining two items in a list (=Oxford comma)
Stop, look, and whistle.
- D. after an introductory (adverbial) phrase / clause
Suddenly, in one violent moment, he turned on his heel and said
When the house of your neighbour is on fire, you are in danger.
- E. before consecutive clauses
The took no notice of him, so that he got impatient.
- F. with linking words, e.g. too, however, in other words, in contrast, though
There are others, however, that are more widely accepted.
- G. in non-defining / non-restrictive relative clauses (the information could be left out)
Paul, who is usually a very cheerful person, seemed sad today.
- H. with participles in non-finite clauses
Standing apart, they held hand, surveying each other.
Applied to the classroom, these findings may prove useful.
She disappeared, taking refuge in her bedroom.
- I. interrupters, parenthesis (insertion, comment clause)
But in some way, deep down, she felt hope.
Taking your shoes off in the room 002 is, according to Mrs. Hajičová, necessary.
- J. apposition
My mother, Angela, is a wonderful cook.
- K. multiple adjectives modifying a noun to an equal degree
That man is a pompous, self-righteous, annoying idiot.
- L. showing contrast
His feelings about her were in fact of relief, not of envy.
- M. direct address
Chris, what is this?
Dear Jane, ... Yours sincerely, Peter.
- N. interjections
Damn, they're in front of our car.

O. question tags

- These willow trees are beautiful, aren't they?
- P. month-day-year format (but not with day-month-year)
July 4, 1776, was an important day in American history.
- Q. quotation marks (BRE: comma after the closing QM / AmE: comma before the closing QM)
"Pass me that thesaurus", said Matthew. / "Pass me that thesaurus," said Matthew.
- R. comma instead of quotation marks (often in newspaper titles)
Schoolyard shootings are on the way, principals warned.
- S. intensifying
Get our you ..., get out!
- T. if a number consists of more than 3 digits, a comma is used before each group of 3 digits
1,258,367
- U. addresses (but not with post codes BRE / zip codes AmE)
7 Walton Street, Reepham, Norwich NR 10 4AH, England
- Commas before *but*
- A. Use a comma before *but* if it is joining two independent clauses:
~~Cleo is a good singer but she's an even better dancer.~~
Cleo is a good singer, but she's an even better dancer.
- B. If *but* is not joining two independent clauses, leave the comma out.
~~My teacher is tough but fair.~~
My teacher is tough but fair.
~~Life is but a dream.~~
Life is but a dream.
- Semicolon
- When you want to join two independent clauses, you need a conjunction or a semicolon. A comma alone isn't strong enough to join them.
~~We were out of milk, I went to the store.~~
We were out of milk, so I went to the store.
We were out of milk; I went to the store.
We were out of milk. I went to the store.

Sources: Pipalová Renata, and Mark Farrell. *Interpunkce v angličtině*. Milioslav Holman, 2008.

"Rules for Comma Usage." *Grammarly*, 14 May 2019, <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/comma/>.