

The comma is an essential and versatile punctuation mark in the English language, used to separate words, phrases, or clauses in a sentence. It helps convey meaning, clarify relationships between elements, and improve readability. In this article, we will explore the main uses of commas and provide exercises to help you practice and perfect their usage.

1) Separating Items in a List:

When listing three or more items, use commas to separate them. The last item is usually preceded by a conjunction such as "and" or "or."

Example: She bought apples, bananas, and grapes at the store.

2) Joining Independent Clauses:

A comma is used with a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) to connect two independent clauses.

Example: He wanted to go to the party, but he had to study for his exam.

3) Setting Off Introductory Elements:

Use commas after introductory words, phrases, or clauses that come before the main clause.

Example: After the rain stopped, we went for a walk.

4) Separating Coordinate Adjectives:

Coordinate adjectives are adjectives that independently modify a noun. If you can insert "and" between them without changing the meaning, they are coordinate and should be separated by a comma.

Example: She wore a beautiful, elegant gown to the event.

5) Setting Off Non-restrictive Elements (relative clauses):

Non-restrictive elements provide additional information but are not essential to the meaning of a sentence. They should be set off with commas.

Example: My sister, who is a doctor, lives in New York.

6) Setting Off Parenthetical Expressions:

Commas are used to set off expressions that interrupt the flow of a sentence, such as "however," "on the other hand," "in fact," or "for example."

Example: The movie, for example, was not as interesting as I thought it would be.

7) Direct Address:

When addressing someone directly in a sentence, use commas to set off their name or title.

Example: As you can see, John, the results are quite impressive.

8) Dates, Addresses, and Titles:

Commas are used to separate the elements of dates, addresses, and titles following a name.

Example: She was born on June 12, 1998, in London, England.

Exercises:

Add commas where necessary in the following sentences:

The tall dark-haired man entered the room carrying a briefcase.

We visited Rome Paris London and Madrid during our summer vacation.

When I saw the dog running toward me I knew I needed to act quickly.

On November 5 2020 my cousin moved to Boston, Massachusetts.

My favorite hobbies include reading painting and listening to music.

The book which was on the shelf is now on the table.

My brother a lawyer will be coming to the party tonight.

She was excited about the trip but she couldn't go because she was sick.

The conference will take place on May 15 2023 in San Francisco California.

Before we start the presentation please make sure your phones are on silent.

When I arrived at the park I saw children playing soccer.

My friends decided to watch a movie eat pizza and play video games.

She has been to France Germany Spain and Portugal.

My dog who loves to play fetch was eager to go outside.

The teacher assigned homework on Monday Wednesday and Friday.

The concert which was sold out was an unforgettable experience.

Before we leave make sure you have your passport and tickets.

He bought her a diamond necklace for their anniversary which she loved.

The cake was covered in chocolate frosting strawberries and whipped cream.

Dear Emily

I hope you are doing well. I am writing to tell you about my new classmate Tom who joined our class last week. Tom is originally from Australia and has moved here with his family. I met him on the first day of school when he asked me for directions to our classroom.

Tom is a tall athletic guy with brown hair and blue eyes. He has a friendly personality and is easy to talk to. In fact in just a week he has made friends with many people in our class. Tom is not only good at sports but also excels in academics. He enjoys science math and history. When we had a group project in history he took the lead and helped us gather information about the ancient Egyptians. He seems to have a great passion for learning about different cultures and their histories.

Interestingly Tom has traveled to many countries such as Spain Italy Japan and Canada. He loves sharing his travel experiences with us and it's fascinating to hear his stories. Tom has also expressed interest in joining our school's basketball team. Considering his height and athletic abilities I am sure he will be a great addition to the team.

I think you would really like Tom and I hope you get the chance to meet him soon. It is amazing how he has brought positive energy to our class and has already made a significant impact. I am excited to see what the future holds for our friendship and I am grateful to have such a kind and interesting new classmate.

Anyway I just wanted to share this update with you and I look forward to catching up with you soon. Take care and talk to you later.

Best regards

Your friend

Dear Emily,

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Interestingly, Tom has traveled to many countries, such as Spain, Italy, Japan, and Canada. He loves sharing his travel experiences with us, and it's fascinating to hear his stories. Tom has also expressed interest in joining our school's basketball team. Considering his height and athletic abilities, I am sure he will be a great addition to the team.

I think you would really like Tom, and I hope you get the chance to meet him soon. It is amazing how he has brought positive energy to our class and has already made a significant impact. I am excited to see what the future holds for our friendship, and I am grateful to have such a kind and interesting new classmate.

Anyway, I just wanted to share this update with you, and I look forward to catching up with you soon. Take care and talk to you later.

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Coordinate adjectives

<https://www.usu.edu/markdamen/writingguide/CGGS/311f.htm>

1. The tall, dark-haired man entered the room carrying a briefcase. Explanation: The comma is needed to separate the two descriptive phrases "tall" and "dark-haired", as they both modify the noun "man".
2. We visited Rome, Paris, London, and Madrid during our summer vacation. Explanation: Commas are necessary to separate items in a list.
3. When I saw the dog running toward me, I knew I needed to act quickly. Explanation: A comma is necessary to separate the dependent clause "When I saw the dog running toward me" from the independent clause "I knew I needed to act quickly".
4. On November 5, 2020, my cousin moved to Boston, Massachusetts. Explanation: Commas are needed to set off the date, which is an appositive to "November 5".
5. My favorite hobbies include reading, painting, and listening to music. Explanation: Commas are necessary to separate items in a list.

6. The book, which was on the shelf, is now on the table. Explanation: The commas set off the non-essential clause "which was on the shelf".
7. My brother, a lawyer, will be coming to the party tonight. Explanation: The commas set off the non-essential phrase "a lawyer", which provides additional information about "my brother".
8. She was excited about the trip, but she couldn't go because she was sick. Explanation: The comma is needed to separate the two independent clauses joined by the coordinating conjunction "but".
9. The conference will take place on May 15, 2023, in San Francisco, California. Explanation: Commas are needed to set off the date and the state, which are appositives to "May 15" and "San Francisco", respectively.
10. Before we start the presentation, please make sure your phones are on silent. Explanation: The comma is needed to separate the introductory phrase "Before we start the presentation" from the main clause.
11. When I arrived at the park, I saw children playing soccer. Explanation: A comma is necessary to separate the dependent clause "When I arrived at the park" from the independent clause "I saw children playing soccer".
12. My friends decided to watch a movie, eat pizza, and play video games. Explanation: Commas are necessary to separate items in a list.
13. She has been to France, Germany, Spain, and Portugal. Explanation: Commas are necessary to separate items in a list.
14. My dog, who loves to play fetch, was eager to go outside. Explanation: The commas set off the non-essential clause "who loves to play fetch".
15. The teacher assigned homework on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Explanation: Commas are necessary to separate items in a list.
16. The concert, which was sold out, was an unforgettable experience. Explanation: The commas set off the non-essential clause "which was sold out".
17. Before we leave, make sure you have your passport and tickets. Explanation: The comma is needed to separate the introductory phrase "Before we leave" from the main clause.
18. He bought her a diamond necklace for their anniversary, which she loved. Explanation: The commas set off the non-essential clause "which she loved".
19. The cake was covered in chocolate frosting, strawberries, and whipped cream. Explanation: Commas are necessary to separate items in a list.