COMMA USAGE

USE A COMMA BEFORE COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Coordinating conjunctions are for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. (This is a complete list.)

A checking account will save you time in paying bills, and it will give you definite proof that payments have been made.

I was sorry to hear this, for I especially wanted Mr. Brown to see the plan.

NOTE: Do not place a comma before the conjunction in a compound predicate:
We used the adding machine for ten days and returned it to you in good condition.

USE A COMMA TO SET OFF INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

- **Introductory Dependent Clauses:** These clauses are usually introduced by such subordinate conjunctions as if, although, since, while, because, when. (This is not a complete list.)

  Although we did not make a large profit, we made many friends.

  When you plan your next trip, stop at any one of our downtown stores.

  NOTE: When the main clause precedes the dependent clause, no comma is needed:
  She plans to secure a stenographic position if she graduates in June.

  I intend to paint my house this spring although I may regret it.

  This new system has been adopted for the purpose of reducing our expenses so that we can give you the maximum service at the lowest possible cost.

- **Introductory Phrases before Independent Clauses:**

  To succeed in any occupation, one must secure the necessary qualifications.

  Acting on the advice of Mr. Long, he cancelled the order.

  Having finished most of her work, she went to lunch.

  In view of this, we thought you would be interested in a completed course.

  From these figures, you can easily determine the one responsible for the loss.

- **Introductory Words and Transitional Expressions:**

  Certainly, the order should have been processed early last week.

  Well, our new supply certainly should be here in another week or so.

  My, but sales are climbing at a rapid rate.

  On the other hand, a more stringent policy might produce better results.

  Furthermore, the subscriptions you obtain will be a source of additional profit.

USE A COMMA TO SET OFF INTERRUPTERS

- **Transitions and Parenthetical Words, Phrases, and Clauses:**

  You must, therefore, act quickly if you wish to take advantage of this price.

  It may be, of course, that you prefer the more expensive material.

  We have all types of boxes, for example, corrugated or plastic.

  We hope, Mr. Long, that we may have the pleasure of serving you soon.

  Ms. Thompson, your suggestion is an excellent one.

- **Nonessential (Nonrestrictive Relative) Clauses:**

  Our company, which has been in business since 1908, has made little paper of this type.

  This pad, which has your name embossed in gold, will be sent free of charge.
My sister, who listens well, smiled knowingly.

- **Appositives**: An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that modifies another noun or noun phrase.
  
  An office friend, *Mr. Ralph Linder*, is purchasing a new car this spring.

  Your task is simplified if you have a copy of our book, *Improved Reading*.

- **Contrasted Expressions**:
  
  It was the sporting goods, *not the hardware*, that were reduced in price.

  You should use an electric calculator, *not a hand-driven one*.

  This book tells you, *among other things*, that it will make an effective advertising medium.

  You will find, *I am sure*, that it will make an effective advertising medium.

**USE COMMAS TO SET OFF WORDS, PHRASES, OR SHORT CLAUSES IN A SERIES**

  This filter will remove *dust, dirt, and grime* from the oil.

  The woman who *rushes in, buys something, and rushes out* is cheating herself.

**NOTE:** Addresses and dates in a sentence are also treated as a series:

  Please write our local dealer, *The Office Supply Company, 664 W. Main Street, Waco, Texas*.

  You will find it a pleasure to deal with our bank, which was established in *April 1902*, and which has been serving the public ever since.

  **NOTE:** When writing with “such as,” a comma is used before it but not after it if it introduces a nonrestrictive appositive. If it introduces a restrictive appositive, no punctuation is used.

  Office supplies, *such as stationary, carbon paper, and pencils*, afford a good opportunity for economy.

  Mistakes such as this can lead to serious consequences.

**USE A COMMA TO INTRODUCE AN INFORMAL QUOTATION**

  Why not take a minute and write us a note saying, “Send us a complete list of samples and prices?”

  “Get production started,” said Mr. Brown, “before we lose that order.”

  **NOTE:** When the quotation is long or formal, a colon may be used.

**USE A COMMA IN THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL CASES**

- **To Indicate Omission of a Word or Words**:

  In January, the mailing department mailed 784 packages; in February, 723; and in March, 814.

- **To Set off a Declarative Statement from a Short Question Relating To It**:

  *Mr. Arnold gave my message to Mr. Ward, didn’t he?*

- **To Separate Two Identical Words or Two Unrelated Numbers**:

  I told you, you would never regret your decision.

  *In 1974, 783 new members were added to the association.*

- **To Set off Explanatory Clauses**:

  *We must insist on our usual standard of quality; that is, no battery can be sold unless it meets the most rigid inspection.*

- **TO SET OFF THOUSANDS IN FIGURES CONTAINING FOUR DIGITS OR MORE, except in serial numbers, such as page, policy, telephone and year numbers:**

  1,726  729,500  93,000,000  770-555-1234

  page 1136  The year 2000  3746 N. Avenue  Policy no. 6206119