

COMMON COMMA RULES

<http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/moduleCOMMA.htm>

COMMA RULE #1 – THE COMMA IN A SERIES: Use commas to separate items in a series.

COMMA RULE #2 – THE COMMA WITH COORDINATE ADJECTIVES: Use commas between coordinate adjectives.

COMMA RULE #3 – THE COMMA IN A COMPOUND SENTENCE: Use a comma before *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, or *yet* to join two independent clauses that form a compound sentence.

COMMA RULE #4 – THE COMMA WITH INTRODUCTORY WORDS: Place a comma after introductory phrases that tell *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*.

1. After a long introductory phrase.
2. After an introductory phrase made up of “to” plus a verb and any modifiers (“infinitive”) that tells *why*.
3. After an introductory clause that answers *when? where? why? how? to what degree?*

COMMA RULE #5 – THE COMMA WITH NONESSENTIAL WORDS, PHRASES, AND CLAUSES: Separate with a comma any nonessential words or groups of words from the rest of the sentence.

1. Separate “interrupter” words like *however*, *nevertheless*, *yes*, *no*, *of course*, from the rest of the sentence.
2. Separate a “renamer” (an appositive) from the rest of the sentence with a comma.
3. Separate adjective phrases from the essential parts of the sentence.
4. Separate nonessential *adjective clauses* from the rest of the sentence.

There are two kinds of adjective clauses:

- one that is needed for the sentence to be complete (ESSENTIAL)
- one that is NOT needed for the sentence to be complete (NONESSENTIAL)

The *essential* adjective clause should NOT be separated from the sentence with commas.

The *nonessential* adjective clause (like other nonessential elements) SHOULD be separated with commas.

REMEMBER, there are 4 nonessential elements that should be separated from the rest of the sentence with commas:

1. “interrupter” words like *of course*, *however*
2. “renamers” (appositives)
3. nonessential adjective phrases
4. nonessential adjective clauses