

## Comma Rules

### Series and Interruptors

- Use commas to separate words and word groups in a simple series of three or more items.
- Use a comma to separate two adjectives when the order of the adjectives is interchangeable.
- Use a comma after certain words that introduce a sentence, such as well, yes, why, hello, hey, etc.
- Use commas to set off the name, nickname, term of endearment, or title of a person directly addressed.
- Use a comma before and after certain introductory words or terms, such as namely, that is, i.e., e.g., and for instance, when they are followed by a series of items.
- Use commas to set off expressions that interrupt the sentence flow (nevertheless, after all, by the way, on the other hand, however, etc.).

### Proper Words

- Use a comma to separate the day of the month from the year, and always put one after the year, also.
- Use a comma to separate a city from its state, and put one after the state.
- Traditionally, if a person's name is followed by Sr. or Jr., a comma follows the last name: Martin Luther King, Jr. This comma is no longer considered mandatory. However, if a comma does precede Sr. or Jr., another comma must follow the entire name when it appears midsentence.
- Similarly, use commas to enclose degrees or titles used with names.

### Sentence Structure

- In sentences where two independent clauses are joined by connectors such as and, or, but, etc., put a comma at the end of the first clause.
- When starting a sentence with a dependent clause, use a comma after it. Do not use a comma when the sentence starts with an independent clause followed by a dependent clause.
- Use commas to set off nonessential words, clauses, and phrases. If something or someone is sufficiently identified, the description that follows is considered nonessential and should be surrounded by commas.

### Quotations

- Use commas to introduce or interrupt direct quotations.
- If the quotation comes before he said, she wrote, or a similar attribution, end the quoted material with a comma.
- If a quotation functions as a subject or object in a sentence, it might not need a comma.
- If a quoted question ends in midsentence, the question mark replaces a comma.

### Miscellaneous

- Use a comma to separate a statement from a question.
- Use a comma to separate contrasting parts of a sentence.
- A comma should precede the term etc. Many authorities also recommend a comma after etc. when it is placed midsentence.