

THE COMMA

**** note: I did NOT create this. Like many educators, I have begged, borrowed, and stolen for most of my career. I can't claim ANY of this as original, nor do I OWN it.***



Comma, comma, comma, comma, comma, chameleon...

Let's eat grandpa.
Let's eat, grandpa.

**correct punctuation can
save a person`s life.**

COMMAS

- Use **commas** to **separate items** in a **series**.

e.g., He recycled the newspapers, washed his car, and cut the grass.

e.g., He enjoys Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven.

COMMAS

- Use a **comma** to **separate two** coordinate **adjectives** preceding a noun.

1. I had a long, quiet talk
with Aunt Bea.

Wait?? What
about this? No
comma? Why?

2. He wore a bright red cap.



COMMAS

- Use a **comma** before a **coordinating conjunction** when it joins **independent clauses**.

e.g., I had practiced the concerto, **yet** I felt nervous before the concert.

COMMAS, PART 2



Contains information that is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence.

- Use **commas** to set off
nonessential subordinate clauses
and nonessential participial
phrases.

NONESSENTIAL - COMMAS

Nonessential clause:

1. Bryan, who is a track star, was accepted at Yale.

Nonessential phrase:

2. Jennifer, hoping for a scholarship, works hard.

NONESSENTIAL

The nonessential clause or phrase **can be omitted** without changing the meaning of the sentence.

1. Bryan was accepted at Yale.
2. Jennifer works hard.

ESSENTIAL – NO COMMAS

Essential clause:

1. Bryan is the only senior who was offered three scholarships.

Essential phrase:

2. Any student hoping for a scholarship should apply by Friday.

ESSENTIAL – NO COMMAS

Essential clause:

1. Bryan is the only senior.

Essential phrase:

2. Any student should apply by
Friday.

COMMA WITH INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

Use a **commas** after certain **introductory elements**

- After *yes*, *no*, or any mild exclamation such as *well* or *man*.

1. *Yes*, you are welcome to join us.

2. *Well*, what do you think?

COMMA WITH INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

Use a **commas** after an **introductory participle** or **participial phrase**.

1. Proofreading my report, I noticed that I had written the wrong word.
2. Hidden by the dense brush, the rabbit sat absolutely still.

**** NOTE ****

Do not confuse a **gerund phrase** used as the **subject of a sentence** with an introductory participial phrase.

1. **Planting the Japanese trees along the fence** took several hours.
2. **Planting the Japanese trees along the fences,** I stepped on a mound of fire ants.

COMMA WITH INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

Use a **commas** after **two or more**

introductory prepositional phrases or after a long prepositional phrase.

1. **In the park near my house,** a music festival will take place.
2. **On the day when the last autumn leaf finally fell,** I packed my bags.

COMMA WITH INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS

Use a **commas** after an **introductory dependent clause**.

1. **While I ate breakfast,** a music festival started across the street.
2. **As soon as you stop crying,** I will pack my bags.