

COMMA RULES: SUMMARY

SUBJECT	RULE	EXAMPLE
1. COMPOUND SENTENCES ("FANBOYS")	Place a comma in front of coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) if these conjunctions introduce a complete sentence . You may omit the comma before "and" and "or" if the entire sentence is no longer than ten words.	There was a band playing down at Klein's hotel, <u>and</u> the strains reached them faintly, tempered by the distance. She walked away <u>and</u> they called to her.
2. ITEMS IN A SERIES	Place commas between all items in a series (3 or more items). Oxford Comma: If the last item is preceded by "and" or "or," you may put a comma before it (but you do not have to).	Mrs. Pontellier danced twice with her husband, once with Robert, and once with Monsieur Ratignolle. She saw no pictures of solitude, of hope, of longing, or of despair.
3. INTRODUCTORY ELEMENTS	Put a comma after introductory words, phrases, and clauses that come before the main clause of the sentence.	" <u>Well</u> , I hope you left some suitable excuse," said her husband. <u>At an early hours in the evening</u> , the Farival twins were prevailed upon to play the piano. <u>After Mrs. Pontellier had danced twice with her husband</u> , she went out on the gallery.
4. CONNECTIVE ADVERBS AND TRANSITIONAL PHRASES	Because these function as introductory elements in a sentence, put commas after connective adverbs (<i>however, furthermore, therefore...</i>) and transitional phrases (<i>for example, as a result ...</i>) if they come before the main clause of the sentence.	She worked with great energy and interest; <u>however</u> , she did not accomplish anything.
5. NON-ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS	Put commas around phrases and clauses that provide additional information but are not necessary to the clarity of your sentence. Tip: Proper names of persons, places, or things always define what you are talking about; any modifiers following them are always non-essential.	He stopped before the door of his own cottage, <u>which was the fourth one from the main building</u> . Two young girls, the Farival twins, were playing a duet upon the piano.
6. NO COMMAS AROUND ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS	If a word, phrase, or clause is necessary for the sentence to make sense, do not put commas around it.	This had been the programme <u>which Mrs. Pontellier had followed since her marriage</u> .
7. PARENTHETICAL EXPRESSIONS	Put commas around words and phrases that interrupt the sentence (if you were to put these in parentheses, you would still have a complete sentence).	In former times, <u>before Robert could remember</u> , the house had been a summer luxury of the Lebruns. She could only realize that she

		herself, <u>her present self</u> , was in some way different from the other self. I am glad, <u>however</u> , that you came to visit.
8. DIRECT ADDRESS, NAMES, TITLES	Put commas around all expressions of direct address (such as names or titles)	"Come go along, <u>Lebrun</u> ," Mr. Pontellier proposed to Robert. Why, <u>my dear</u> , I should think you'd understand that people don't do such things.
9. QUOTES	Use commas to separate quoted word (or direct speech) from the rest of the sentence.	"It seems to me," he said, "we spend money enough in this house to procure at least one meal a day which a man could eat and retain his self-respect."
10. NO COMMAS BEFORE DEPENDENT CLAUSES	If the dependent clause follows the main clause, you do not put a comma.	She stood on the front verandah <u>as he quitted the house</u> . The children's nurse posed for her <u>while the house-maid took charge of the children</u> .
11. APPOSITIVES	Put commas around modifiers that follow nouns (called "appositives")	Mr. Pontellier, <u>unable to read his newspaper with any degree of comfort</u> , arose with an expression and an exclamation of disgust.
12. SENTENCE ADVERBS	Put commas before sentence adverbs (phrases/clauses that modify the entire sentence) if they follow the main clause.	She laughed and bantered a little, <u>remembering too late that she should have been dignified and reserved</u> .
13. CONTRASTING EXPRESSIONS	Contrasting expressions beginning with <i>not, never, seldom</i> .	This is the book I wanted, <u>not that one</u> .
14. CLAUSES BUILT ON CONTRAST	Put commas around elements in a sentence that express a contrast.	The longer she looked at the picture, the more she wanted it.
15. QUESTION TAGS	Put commas before question tags at the end of the sentence.	Chopin's <i>The Awakening</i> is a fascinating book, <u>isn't it?</u>
16. EMPHASIS	Put commas between words repeated for emphasis.	She gazed out at the vast, vast ocean before her.
17. OMISSION OF IMPORTANT WORDS	To prevent a misreading of the sentence, put commas when you omit words in a sentence with parallel structure.	Kate Chopin was born in St. Louis on February 8, 1851.
18. DATES AND ADDRESSES	Use commas to separate dates and the different parts of addresses.	Please send your application to The University of New Orleans, 2000 Lakeshore Dr., New Orleans, LA 70148.