



Using Commas: Part Two

Using Commas in a Series

Commas are used to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses that are written in a series. A comma is placed between each item in a series in order to separate them from one another. Additionally, a conjunction such as “and” or “or” can be placed before the last item. Remember, a conjunction is a word that joins words, phrases, ideas, and clauses with the goal of showing how they are connected (e.g. for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

Examples:

- The dog is fluffy, lazy, and sweet.
- When Bob went to the store, he bought milk, cheese, and bread.

Using a Comma Before a Quotation

A comma can be used before a quotation after phrases like *he/she said*, *the author stated*, *the author concludes*, etc.

Examples:

- The author stated, “The evidence I found supported my hypothesis.”
- My father pointed at a photograph and said, “That’s me in the ‘80s.”

Using a Comma to Set off Clauses, Phrases, and Words

A pair of commas can also be used to set off clauses, phrases, and words that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. There should be a comma at the beginning of the phrase and then one at the end in order to indicate that you are returning to the rest of the sentence.

Examples:

- **Clause:** My grandfather, **who is ninety years old**, walks two miles every day.
- **Phrase:** The amusement park has a very thrilling atmosphere. The food, **on the other hand**, is very dull.
- **Word:** Kevin decided, **nonetheless**, not to buy the car.

Using Commas with Dates, Addresses, and Geographical Names

Commas are used with geographical names in order to set off the different types of elements from each other (city or town, state, region, country). In terms of dates, a comma is used to set off the day from the year, but no comma is necessary to separate the month from the day (i.e. January 6, 2021). No comma is necessary when you only use the month and the year (i.e. She was born in September 1997). Commas are also used in addresses to separate all elements except for the zip code and the street number from the street name.

Examples:

- My brother was born on December 23, 1994.
- Birmingham, Alabama, gets its name from Birmingham, England.
- His father has lived at 1400 Pennsylvania Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 60611 all his life.



Using Commas with Coordinate Adjectives

Commas are used to separate two or more coordinate adjectives that are describing the same noun. Coordinate adjectives are adjectives that have equal status when it comes to describing a noun and neither is subordinate to the other. To decide if two adjectives in a row are coordinate you can ask yourself these questions:

1. Would the sentence make sense if the adjectives were written in reverse order?
2. Would the sentence make sense if there was an *and* between the adjectives?

If the answer to both of these questions is yes, then the adjectives are coordinated and need a comma to separate them.

Examples:

- He was a generous, happy child.
- The cabin was next to a sparkling, peaceful river.

**Ask yourself the two questions from above. Since the answer is yes to both of them, there should be a comma in between both adjectives.

**When two or more adjectives are used to describe something, there is an established Order of Adjectives. In English, the Order of Adjectives is opinion, size, age, shape, color, origin, material, and purpose.

Practice on Your Own!

1. Our dinner was a concoction of pasta chicken and bacon.
2. Sam said "I want chocolate!"
3. The business was located at 3456 Melrose Park Illinois.
4. A beautiful antique mixing bowl.
5. It was the plot of the movie not the actors or special effects that attracted audience members.

1. Our dinner was a concoction of pasta, chicken, and bacon.
2. Sam said, "I want chocolate!"
3. The business was located at 3456 Melrose Park, Illinois.
4. A beautiful, antique mixing bowl.
5. It was the plot of the movie, not the actors or special effects, that attracted audience members.

Answer Key:

Further Assistance: This resource is available at lewisuwritingcenter.wordpress.com. For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.