

Conventions: When to Use a Comma

1. Use a comma between words or phrases in a series

Examples:

blue, red, green

up the hill, over the log, and down the hole

2. Use a comma to separate the elements of an address (street and city, city and state).

Example:

5 Elm Street, Sample Town, New York

3. Use a comma after the state in a sentence when using city, state.

Example:

We are going to Sample Town, New York, to visit our grandfather.

4. Use a comma in dates between day and year. Also, if the date precedes the remainder of the sentence, you need a comma AFTER the date as well.

Examples:

June 10, 2009

April 5, 2008

Example: On November 6, 2008, I will watch my son play football.

5. Use a comma after the greeting of a friendly letter.

Example:

Dear Emilio,

Hi! I hope you are enjoying seventh grade.

6. Use a comma after the closing of a friendly letter.

Examples:

With best wishes,

Love,

Sincerely,

7. Use comma to separate nouns of direct address from the rest of the sentence.

Examples:

Kim, I asked you to step over here.

You know, Rebecca, we could go there tomorrow.

8. Use a comma to separate introductory words from the rest of the sentence.

Examples:

Yes, I have heard of that show.

Well, I guess that's true.

Tomorrow, we look forward to playing soccer.

9. Use a comma to separate a direct quote from a phrase identifying the speaker.

Example:

Tomas said, "We had fun participating in English class today."

"We had fun participating in English class today," Tomas said.

10. Use commas to set off an introductory phrase or dependent clause.

Examples:

After we left, she phoned the office.

From the couch, the cat jumped onto the bookcase.

11. Use commas to set off interrupters.

Examples:

The last book, though, was very interesting.
He had told us, however, that he would study more.

12. Set off appositives with commas.

Examples:

The Marsden's, our nearest neighbors, left on vacation today.

My brother's dog, the big white one, is rolling in the leaves.

13. Use a comma before the conjunction in compound sentences.

Example: She likes candy, but she loves ice cream.

14. Use a comma between adjectives that come before a noun.

Example:

An enormous, violent hurricane was headed our way.