

LANGUAGE CONVENTION-

8 COMMON COMMA RULES

1) Use commas to separate items in a list of three or more.

Remember that an “item” may refer to a noun, verb, or adjective phrase.

Correct: I need to buy eggs, milk, lettuce, and bread.

2) Use a comma to separate independent clauses (complete thoughts) when they are joined by the following conjunctions:

(F.A.N.B.O.Y.S.): for, and, nor, but, or, yet, & so

Note: the comma should come **before** the conjunction.

Correct: I want to buy the new jacket, but it is too expensive.

In the above example, there are two independent clauses:

#1: “I want to buy the new jacket.” (complete thought)

#2: “It is too expensive.” (complete thought)

3) Use a comma to separate a dependent clause (incomplete thought) (usually contains a subordinating conjunction) from an independent clause (complete thought).

Here are some examples of sentences with dependent and independent clauses:

a) When I get older, I will be able to drive.

(Dependent) (Independent)

b) If you are good, I will buy you a toy.

(Dependent) (Independent)

Correct: If it does not receive water, the plant will die.

4) Use a comma to separate a quotation from the rest of a sentence.

Correct: “We need to buy more sugar,” she said, “before it runs out!”

5) Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of a sentence.

Correct: Hi, how are you?

Correct: Around ten o'clock at night, Dan decided to go to bed.

However, if the phrase is a prepositional phrase of fewer than three words, no comma is needed.

Correct: In the pool Susie was splashing her brother.

6) Use a comma(s) to separate any word or phrase from the rest of the sentence that is not essential to the sentence's meaning.

This phrase usually provides extra information about the subject, and it is also known as an appositive.

Here are some examples of sentences with words/phrases that are not essential to the sentence's meaning (underlined):

1) My brother, a 26-year-old male, is watching TV.

2) Amy Rivers, my best friend, is going to the mall today.

Correct: Jane and Susie, my cousins, are coming to my party.

7) Use a comma to separate the name of a suburb from a country or state.

Correct: I live in Chapel Hill, Burwood.

8) Use a comma to separate the day of the week, the day of the month, and the year.

Correct: Today is Thursday, September 26, 2013.