

Strategies for Writing

AS I WAIT

To help me remember when to use commas.

Addresses and dates.

- Addresses need commas between the city and the state (e.g., Richmond, Virginia).
- Addresses need commas between the city and the country (e.g., London, England).
- Dates need commas between the day and the year (e.g., February 14, 2025).

Set off non-essential information in a sentence.

- Commas are needed to set off non-essential information in a sentence.
- Non-essential information is not important for the meaning of a sentence. You can omit this information and the sentence will still have the same meaning (e.g., The ice sculpture, however, melted before the party began.).

Introductory words or clauses.

- Use a comma to separate an introductory clause from the rest of the sentence. The clause is not a complete sentence and cannot stand alone (e.g., After waiting in line for hours, we finally got to see the movie.).
- Use a comma to separate an introductory word at the beginning of the sentence from the rest of the sentence (e.g., Consequently, the war was lost.).

Words in lists.

- Use a comma to separate lists of words that are greater than three (e.g., Please bring your notebook, textbook, and pencil to class.).

Adjectives (two or more) for the same noun.

- Use a comma to separate adjectives that describe the same noun (e.g., She likes pretty, frilly dresses.).

Independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions.

- An independent clause contains a noun and verb and can stand alone as a complete sentence.
- Coordinating conjunctions are words that separate the two independent clauses (e.g., *and, but, or, for, nor, so*). (The fire alarm went off, but there was no fire.)

Titles that follow a name.

- Titles are abbreviations for degrees that people have (e.g., Joseph Wilson, M.D.) or for people who have the same names (e.g., Tyrone Johnson, Jr. versus Tyrone Johnson, III).