

Commas

Only use commas when you know exactly why you are using them.

When Should I Use Commas?

1: Before coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet) when these words connect two complete sentences.

- *I already have four pets, but I still want more.*
- *I could not catch Wally, and he kept running.*

2: Between items listed in a series (individual words, phrases, dependent clauses). Use a comma before the coordinating conjunction and last item of the series unless you are writing a newspaper article.

- *My grocery list includes food for my roommates, my dogs, and my cats.*
- *I chased Koda out the gate, through the yard, across the street, and into the FedEx truck.*

3: After introductory clauses or phrases in a sentence. Subordinate conjunctions (before, since, because, etc.), prepositions (in, on, after, etc.), and verbals (running, ignored, etc.) at the beginning of sentences are signal words for introductory material.

- *Since the bowl was empty, Bear cried for his food.*
- *When I let Korra outside, she immediately began to eat grass.*
- *Running from the cat, Koda felt terrified.*

4: To enclose or set off transitional or explanatory words and nonessential phrases, clauses, or appositives that interrupt the sentence structure.

- Korra, however, never runs from the cat.*
(transitional word)
- Bear's only exercise, besides chasing the dogs, is looking for food.*
(nonessential phrase)
- Wally, who loved water, jumped into the bathtub.*
(nonessential clause)
- Korra, my allergy prone dog, continued to eat everything she could find.*
(nonessential appositive)

Complete Sentences

A complete sentence expresses a complete thought and contains a subject and a verb. Many sentences involving commas modify or expand upon a complete sentence.

Nonessential Phrases

A nonessential phrase may also occur at the end of a sentence, after the main clause (complete sentence) is expressed.

I walked to the park, unsure how long I would be outside.

5: To separate parts of dates, addresses, or geographical names.

- *I adopted Korra on October 7, 2008.*
- *1357 West Maple, Salem, Oregon, is where I found Koda.*

6: To separate what is being said from the person(s) being addressed.

- *Wally, please eat your food.*
- *Korra, stop eating grass.*
- *Please, Bear, leave the dogs alone!*

7: To enclose explanatory words that introduce, interrupt, or conclude a direct quotation.

- *I said, "Koda, you cannot leave with the FedEx driver!"*
- *"Sorry buddy," the FedEx driver apologized, "can't go with me today."*
- *"I can't refuse them when they want to sleep on the couch," she admitted.*

8: To separate two or more coordinate adjectives modifying the same noun or pronoun. Adjectives are coordinate if they can be rearranged without changing the meaning and if the word 'and' can be inserted between them without changing the meaning.

- *Bear is a needy, lovable cat.* (Bear is a needy and lovable cat.)
- *My pets are a bunch of lovable, pathetic babies.*