

COMMA RULES

Directions: After each rule and example, add commas to the sentences where needed.

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.

Note: Usage of a comma to separate the second-to-last from the last item is optional.

Example: I need to buy eggs milk lettuce and bread.

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

PRACTICE 1

1. Carlos wants to visit Paris Italy Germany and China.
2. My favorite colors are blue red and pink.
3. I like to go hiking fishing swimming and camping during summer.
4. I have to clean my room walk the dog and take out the trash.

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

AND	OR	FOR	NOR	SO	BUT	YET
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Note: The comma should come *before* the conjunction.

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

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

In this example, there are two independent clauses:

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

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

These clauses are separated by a **comma** before the conjunction **“but”**.

PRACTICE 2

1. We can go to the zoo or we can go to the movie theater.
2. They like chocolate but they like vanilla better.
3. We will go to the restaurant now for we are very hungry.
4. I do not like biology nor do I like chemistry.

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

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

1) When I get older, I will be able to drive. → (Dependent), (Independent). 2) If you are good, I will buy you a toy. → (Dependent), (Independent).

Example: Without water the plant will die.

Without water, the plant will die.

PRACTICE 3

1. In five minutes the building will be closed.
2. When I get home I am going to brush my teeth.
3. Until I reach my goal I will not stop working.
4. If I get a new job I will be very happy.

4) 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.

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

- 1) My brother, a 26 year old male, is watching TV.
- 2) Amy Rivers, my best friend, is going to the mall today.

Example: My mother on the other hand does not like chocolate.

My mother, on the other hand, does not like chocolate.

PRACTICE 4

1. Daniel Garrison a farmer wakes up very early.
2. Tanner my teacher is wearing a gray shirt.
3. The car a 1967 ford mustang is very fast.
4. When school ends today at 3:15 p.m. we will play soccer.

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

Example: "We need to buy more sugar" she said "before it runs out!"

"We need to buy more sugar," she said, "before it runs out!"

PRACTICE 5

1. "I am tired" he muttered.
2. He said "We need to lower taxes!"
3. "If I don't wake up in time" he whispered "I will be in trouble."
4. "Today will be rainy" the weatherman said with a frown.

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

Example: Hi how are you?

Hi, how are you?

PRACTICE 6

1. Yes I would like more water please.
2. Sorry we do not have enough room.
3. Well I hope the problem will be fixed soon.
4. However I am very good at math.

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

Example: I live in Chapel Hill North Carolina.

I live in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

PRACTICE 7

1. We are moving to Spokane Washington.
2. I visited Florence Italy last summer.
3. The hurricanes hit Tulsa Oklahoma and Destin Florida.

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

Example: Today is Thursday April 18 1943.

Today is Thursday, April 18, 1943.

PRACTICE 8

1. Tomorrow will be Sunday December 2.
2. George Washington was born on February 22 1732.
3. I will be sixteen on Tuesday the 6th of July 1582.

Comma Rules - Answers

Practice 1

1. Carlos wants to visit Paris, Italy, Germany, and China. 2. My favorite colors are blue, red, and pink. 3. I like to go hiking, fishing, swimming, and camping during summer. 4. I have to clean my room, walk the dog, and take out the trash. 5. The tree is very tall, old, and green. 6. I need to visit my mother, wash my car, and buy six stamps.

Practice 2

1. We can go to the zoo, or we can go to the movie theater. 2. They like chocolate, but they like vanilla better. 3. We will go to the restaurant now, for we are very hungry. 4. I do not like biology, nor do I like chemistry.

Practice 3

1. In five minutes, the building will be closed. 2. When I get home, I am going to brush my teeth. 3. Until I reach my goal, I will not stop working. 4. If I get a new job, I will be very happy.

Practice 4

1. Daniel Garrison, a farmer, wakes up very early. 2. I, however, am very thirsty. 3. The car, a 1967 Ford Mustang, is very fast. 4. When school ends today, at 3:15 p.m., we will play soccer.

Practice 5

1. "I am tired," he muttered. 2. He said, "We need to lower taxes!" 3. "If I don't wake up in time," he whispered, "I will be in trouble." 4. "Today will be rainy," the weatherman said with a frown.

Practice 6

1. Yes, I would like more water please. 2. Sorry, we do not have enough room. 3. Well, I hope the problem will be fixed soon. 4. However, I am very good at math.

Practice 7

1. We are moving to Spokane, Washington. 2. I visited Florence, Italy last summer. 3. The hurricanes hit Tulsa, Oklahoma and Destin, Florida.

Practice 8

1. Tomorrow will be Sunday, December 2. 2. George Washington was born on February 22, 1732. 3. I will be sixteen on Tuesday, the 6th of July, 1582. 4. September 11, 2001 is a date that will be remembered.

Comma Rules Practice Quiz

Directions: Add commas to the following sentences where needed.

Section 1: Lists of three or more.

1. My three favorite foods are pasta pizza and ice cream.
2. I need to call Sally Tom Brad and Kelly about the party.
3. The brown fluffy large dog ran across the street.
4. I have to run to the store get my hair cut and pick up the kids from daycare.

Section 2: Separating Independent Clauses.

1. I like to run but not when it's hot.
2. We can go to the grocery store or we can go to the mall.
3. I do not want a dog nor do I want a cat.
4. Karen wants to go to the farm yet her sister does not like farms.

Section 3: Separating Independent and Dependent Clauses.

1. When I get to the mall I will go to the food court.
2. After ten minutes I asked the nurse about the medicine.
3. Because the car broke down I had to call for help.
4. When the flight lands I will hug my family.

Section 4: Separating phrases that are not essential from the rest of the sentence.

1. Tomorrow Wednesday we will take a trip to the zoo.
2. My brother a 22 year old male graduated from college today.
3. I like video games but my sister on the other hand does not.
4. You however are very sunburned.

Section 5: Using commas to separate quotes.

1. "Gas is too expensive" said the experienced driver.

2. "Ouch" screamed the boy after he was stung by a bee.
3. The sister told the brother "of course I will pick you up."
4. "Ready, Set, Go" yelled the mom before the treasure hunt.

Section 6: Introductory Elements.

1. Yes we can find a place for you to stay over the weekend.
2. I'm sorry I did not understand what you said.
3. Excuse me you left your bag on the counter.
4. Wait I think we need to make a left turn up ahead.

Section 7: Separating towns, states, and countries.

1. Paris France is my favorite place to visit.
2. The capital of the United States is Washington D.C.
3. Taylor Lives in Nashville TN.

Section 8: Separating days and months.

1. Today is Tuesday June 10th 1992.
2. The Summer Olympics will begin on Friday August 8th 2008.
3. His Birthday is on February 23rd 1972.