

WRITING CENTER REFERENCE SHEET

Comma Usage

(Created by Meagan Kittle)

Having trouble trying to figure out where to put a comma? This handy reference sheet can guide you in the right direction!

- ☺ Use a comma with a coordinating conjunction (and, for, so, but, yet, or, nor) to separate two independent clauses.
Ex. The professor assigned ninety pages of reading, **and** the students groaned.
Ex. The wind howled outside, **but** it did not stop the kids from venturing out.
Never: The student was late for class, because his alarm did not go off.
▶ Explanation: “Because” is not a coordinating conjunction, so do not use a comma before it.

- ☺ Use a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or clause in a sentence.
Ex. Funny, I never thought about using a comma that way.
Ex. Because his alarm did not go off, the student was late for class.

- ☺ Use commas between items listed in a series.
Ex. She bought M&M’s, cotton candy, and a drink at the concession stand.
Ex. The spoiled dog chewed the pillow, scratched the couch, and caused quite a lot of trouble while his owner was away.

- ☺ Use a comma before introducing a quotation in a sentence.
Ex. The little girl asked her mother, “Why can’t I have another cookie?”
Ex. “What you should always keep in mind,” the coach said, “is that winning is everything.”

- ☺ Use commas around words, phrases, or clauses that are not essential to the sentence.
Ex. The point of the lecture, however, was not to evoke an angry response from its audience.
Ex. The president of the college, who was retiring in May, gave a moving speech.

- ☺ Use a comma near the end of a sentence to indicate a contrasting thought or an afterthought.
Ex. I think that it’s time to leave now, don’t you?
Ex. The large factory explosion was scary, albeit a fascinating sight.