
Four Uses for Commas

1. To separate items in a series:

a series of words:

We took hot dogs, hamburgers, chips, sodas, and cupcakes for our picnic.

a series of phrases:

The bird flew into the window, across the room, and under the chandelier.

a series of clauses:

One terrible summer when we were little, I had the mumps, you had the measles, and he had chicken pox.

2. After introductory elements:

introductory words:

David, please close the door.

Sure, I'll go with you.

No, I haven't taken that exam yet.

Shivering, he hurried into the lobby from the rainy street.

introductory phrases:

Calling for a timeout, the referee blew his whistle.

During the long bus ride home, we all sang songs and kept the sponsors awake.

By the way, do you have a copy of the book?

introductory clauses:

After we claim our first victory, we'll celebrate at Pizza Hut.

When you've gone to this school for a while, you'll know all the short cuts to class.

3. Around interrupting elements:

in quotations:

"When you are ready," he said, "I'll be waiting outside."

appositives:

Abe Jaquez, the president of BUA, will be on campus Thursday.

The scorpion, a member of the crustacean family, can have a deadly bite.

parenthetical elements:

You are, I hope, joining us for dinner.

Long distance rates, after all, are reasonable after dark.

Emily Bronte, not her sister Charlotte, wrote *Wuthering Heights*.

He is not, however, one of my favorite people.

4. Between two complete ideas joined by FANBOYS conjunctions:

(for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

I went to the music store, but they were all out of my favorite CDs.

She never left the house, nor did she call anyone on the phone.

I love basketball, so my father always takes me along to Spurs games.