

Confused About Commas?

Are you unsure where, how, or even when to use commas? If so, here are some helpful hints regarding these pesky punctuation marks.

Use commas to separate items in a list:

They praised her for her *kindness, generosity, and organization.*

Note: Whether to use the second comma depends on your personal preference or the style guide you use. In Associated Press (AP) style, for example, the second comma is omitted:

Summer sports are *baseball, golf and swimming.*

Use commas before connecting words (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet) to separate clauses that could stand alone as sentences:

My father ran to the *kitchen, and* my mother answered the door.

Note: If the separate statements cannot stand alone as sentences, then no comma is needed:

I swept the floor and dusted the picture frames.

Use commas after introductory phrases of three or more words unless they are followed immediately by a verb:

Next Sunday *morning, the* panel of judges will announce the winner.

Note: No comma is needed when the introductory phrase is very short or followed by a verb:

After dinner *came* dancing and singing.

Use a pair of commas to enclose phrases that interrupt a sentence:

Runners, *especially those with shin splints,* need to stretch before racing.

Use a pair of commas when providing extra information about a person you are describing:

Katie, Sara's little sister, works at Hudson's.

Use commas to separate direct quotes from the rest of the prose:

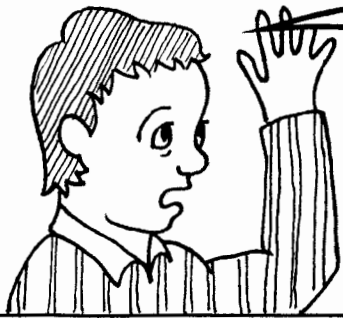
"I don't want to go," Joe said with a sigh.

According to Dr. Monroe, "Zoos have decreased in popularity since 1987."

Use commas to separate dates and geographical locations:

My dad was born on *February 4, 1967.*

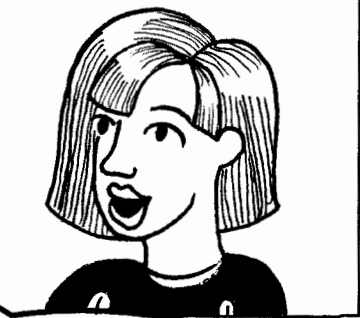
I want to move to *Bernie, Texas.*



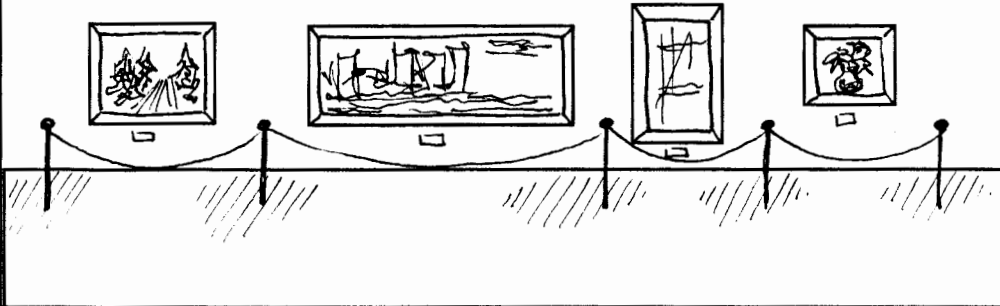
I THINK I USE COMMAS TOO MUCH... OR MAYBE NOT ENOUGH...

COMMAS
;

I CAN SHOW YOU 6 WAYS YOU SHOULD USE COMMAS!



THINK OF YOUR SENTENCES AS AN ART GALLERY, AND THE COMMAS ARE THE PAUSES BETWEEN THE ART. THE PAUSES HAPPEN IN BREAKS BETWEEN PIECES.



HOW TO USE A COMMA:

1

TO SEPARATE ITEMS IN A LIST



2

IN DATES & GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS



3

TO SEPARATE DIRECT QUOTES FROM THE SENTENCE



4

TO JOIN TWO SHORT SENTENCES WITH A CONJUNCTION

Dear Diary,
I left school early today,
and I felt a little guilty.

5

AFTER AN INTRODUCTORY CLAUSE OR PHRASE

After I left school,
I went out to lunch.

6

WHEN ADDING EXTRA INFORMATION

My lunch, which was
too greasy to eat,
gave me a stomach ache.

KNOWING THESE 6 USES OF THE COMMA WILL HELP YOU KNOW WHEN TO ADD MORE OR EDIT SOME OUT.

