

Grammar: 3 Major Comma Rules



1. Use commas to separate two ideas when they are joined by any of the following:
 - a. For, and, nor, but, or, yet, & so. (FANBOYS)
2. Use commas after introductory clauses, phrases, or words that come before the main clause
 - a. Common words that start an introductory clause that should be followed by a comma are: after, although, as, because, if, since, when, & while.
 - b. Do not put a comma after the main clause if the introductory idea comes after the main clause (see example 2).
3. Use commas to separate three or more words, phrases or clauses in a sentence.

Examples:

1. The Oxford Comma
 - a. Ex 1: Before the comma: "I went to dinner with my parents, Michelle Obama and Lebron James."
 - i. This can cause confusion, because the way this sentence is structured, it makes it sound like your parents are Michelle Obama and Lebron James.
 - b. After the comma: "I went to dinner with my parents, Michelle Obama, and Lebron James."
 - i. With the use of the comma in between Michelle Obama and Lebron James, it clarifies that these are 3 different groups of people.
2. Introductory Comma
 - a. Ex 1: **If** you feel ill, you should see a doctor.
 - i. This example is one where the introductory clause comes before the main clause, so a comma is needed.
 - b. Ex 2: You should see a doctor, **if** you feel ill.
 - i. The placement of this comma is incorrect because the introductory clause comes after the main clause.
3. Comma With a List of Items
 - a. Ex 1: During the summer, I traveled to Europe, went skydiving, and learned how to surf.
 - i. Using commas in the sentence helps separate the ideas.
 - b. Ex 2: The Cleveland Browns, with Myles Garrett, Baker Mayfield, and Odell Beckham Jr., should have a chance at making the playoffs this season.
 - i. Commas are used here to separate a list of people.

We hope this helps! If you have any questions contact us at writeplace@chagrinstudents.org

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