

## Six Comma Rules

1. Put a comma before *for, and, not, but, or, yet, so* (FANBOYS), when they connect two independent clauses (complete sentences). When a FANBOY connects two or more independent clauses—word groups that could stand alone as separate sentences—a comma must precede the FANBOY conjunction.
  - Jan and Sue started to play video games, and they ended their studying.
  - Bob may take his children to the zoo today, or he might try to go on Monday when the zoo is free.

Be sure that your sentence does contain two independent clauses. The following sentence is one independent clause with one subject and two verbs.

- Jill wanted to take an extra class but didn't have time to enroll.
2. Put a comma after an introductory expression that doesn't flow smoothly into the sentence or before an afterthought that is tacked on. It may be a word, a group of words, or a dependent clause.
    - Yes, I will go to the park with you today.
    - When I arrived home, the front door was unlocked.
    - It's very important to be on time for meetings, isn't it?
    - However, we decided not to go to the park today.

3. Put a comma between items in a series.
  - When you go to the store buy milk, bread, ice cream, and potatoes.
  - Fred walked into the room, introduced himself to everyone, and sat down.

Some words go together naturally and don't need a comma between them even though they do make up a series or list of adjectives.

- A large vase containing bright red roses was sitting on the desk.

In the case of listings where you already have commas within the sentence for smaller separations, a semi colon is used to show bigger separations.

- On our vacation we went to San Antonio, Texas; Memphis, Tennessee; and Atlanta, Georgia.
4. Put commas around the name of a person spoken to.
    - I hope, Marie, that you will help me with my project.
    - Jonathan, your dog is getting bigger every time I see him.
  5. Put commas around an expression that interrupts the flow of the sentence (such as however, moreover, finally, therefore, of course, by the way, on the other hand, I am sure, I think).
    - I believe, of course, you will help me carry my art project to class.
    - We decided, however, to leave the largest suitcase at home.
    - This vacation, I think, was the best we've ever had.
  6. Put commas around nonessential material. (This material is relevant, but the sentence would be complete without it.)
    - Ross Johnson, who is a professor at our college, gave a lecture on the importance of bees.
    - This shirt I am wearing, which I bought at the Renaissance Festival, was very expensive.